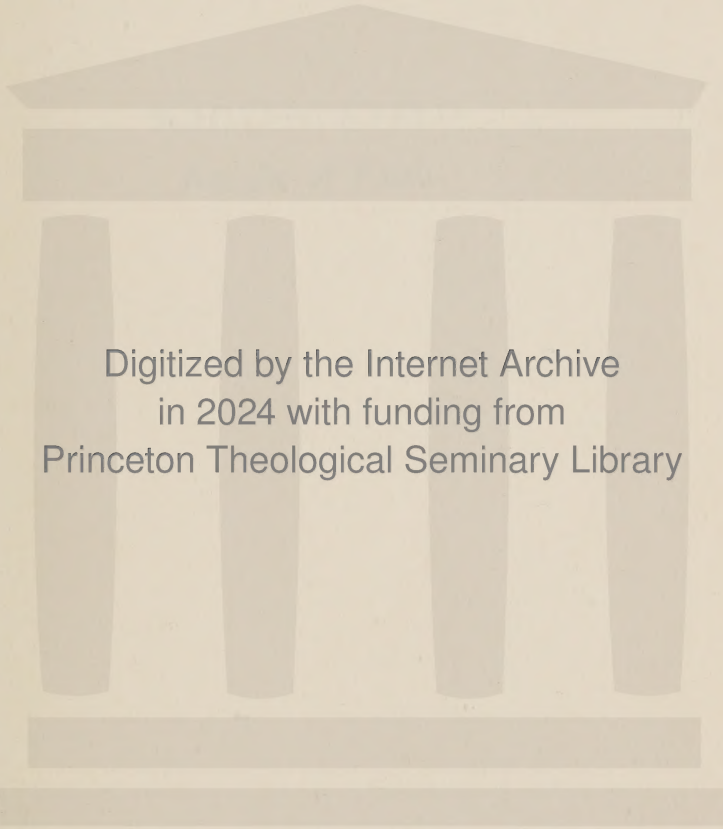


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SCHWENCKFELD

*Knight of Faith*



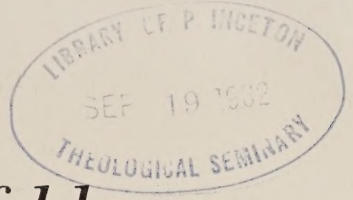






CASPAR a SCHWENCFFELD,  
Eques nobilis Silesius.

C. Wincelent.



*Schwenckfeld*  
KNIGHT OF FAITH



A STUDY IN THE  
HISTORY OF RELIGION



by  
*Joachim H. Seyppel*

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*"Lutheran, Popish, Calvinistic—these beliefs,  
not one, but three are there; however, there  
is still a doubt where Christendom then be."*

FRIEDRICH VON LOGAU

*"A man can become a tragic hero by his  
own powers—but not a knight of faith."*

KIERKEGAARD





## *Preface*

THIS BOOK is to point out the place in which Caspar Schwenckfeld von Ossig (1489-1561), a German from Silesia whose later followers went into exile in the United States, dwells in the history of thought. It is our purpose to fix his position among thinkers and searchers of his age as well as of other ages, to state the type of person he was, to relate him to intellectual movements that seem close to him, and to save him from the isolation within the narrow field of Reformation theology into which he has fallen undeservedly since his death.

So far, works on Schwenckfeld have classified him generally in accordance with his contemporary scene and struggle. That he is only rarely, and superficially, related to our own time, is due to the special research necessary to clarify various phases of his development; and a great deal of minute analysis is still called for to shed light on certain aspects of his thoughts. But the time has come for a first attempt at broadening our view of the Silesian reformer, especially after the thorough biography by Selina Gerhard Schultz. If we suggest

## PREFACE

throwing a network of relations over Schwenckfeld, then it is to catch him together with congenial minds; we are, however, concerned here primarily with situational aspects, and only secondarily with "influences" (although we may consider sympathetically the fact of a later author finding confirmation in an earlier one). We want to accompany him in his spiritual voyage and compare his route with that of others, before and after him. His ship of life—and as a ship he, together with many writers of the 16th and 17th centuries, viewed the voyage from birth to death—must be seen as one of those vessels whose captains searched for new shores. Around 1500 this was a novel thing: to look for new horizons, both geographically and spiritually. Schwenckfeld's followers, in 1734, ventured both in body and mind for the new world which they were to find in Pennsylvania.

We attempt neither a criticism of Schwenckfeld's ideas nor a defense of his beliefs. This book of the apostle of the "Middle Way," as he liked to call himself, is indeed intended as the middle road between criticism and affirmation; as an objective study—if studies can be objective at all—of his situation in the stream of intellectual undertakings. We shall try to avoid the pitfalls of any writer, who during the course of his research is likely to surrender to the ideas of his subject, just as we shall try to be sympathetic to our author's expressions of thought; for without proper distance there is no good perspective, and without sympathy there is no understanding. We should like to view Schwenckfeld *fully*, as he liked to



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view the human person *in toto*, with his merits and shortcomings, his errors and his truth.

Finally, this book was written upon the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Schwenckfeld's death. It was prepared and written with the help of a generous research fellowship from the Schwenkfelder Library in Pennsburg, Pennsylvania, which granted me all freedom of search, time, and opinion. In addition, I had a grant from the American Philosophical Society that helped me in my work and travel. To both organizations goes my gratitude. I am especially grateful to Mr. Andrew S. Berky, Director of the Schwenkfelder Library, who was the *spiritus rector* of the project; to Mrs. Selina Gerhard Schultz, for half a century an editor of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* and the person who more than anybody else is qualified to judge upon works on Schwenckfeld, who was generous with kind advice; to Professor Ernst Jockers of the University of Pennsylvania who read, and suggested many changes of, the manuscript; to my wife who polished the style where it was dull and who resigned in tolerance where dullness could not be helped.

Although not a Schwenkfelder myself, I could not help feeling at home in the Schwenkfelder Library in Pennsburg with the view from my window over the Pennsylvania German countryside, toward the white steeple of what was originally the 18th century *Reformirte Neu-Goschenhoppen Kirche*. Across the hill there, on the old churchyard, many of the first settlers from the Palatinate lie buried under stones with German words, many of which are no longer legible.



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SCHWENCKFELD

*Knight of Faith*



## INTRODUCTION

### ❧ 1 ❧

SCHWENCKFELD today is a name that is meaningful only among his followers in Pennsylvania; here his spirit is kept alive. In Germany where he lived, his name is history; by a few people he is acknowledged as a forerunner of modern piety.<sup>1</sup> The soil on which he was born was separated from the bulk of Germany and has been settled by Poles. His grave in Ulm has not been found. People who adhered to his teaching in the German Southwest died out in the bloody Thirty Years' War; those from Silesia left for America in the 18th century. The village, Harpersdorf, where the last Schwenckfelder died is hardly accessible today; it lies beyond the Oder-Neisse line of demarcation between East Germany and Poland, a line that cut in two the provinces in which mysticism flowered perhaps more than anywhere else and which brought forth, after Schwenckfeld, men like Jacob Boehme and Angelus Silesius. To be sure, the tomes that the Silesian re-

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former wrote stand in many libraries of the world, but to most of the scholars who are acquainted with their ideas or who happen to have read of them, they represent something which is dead; to others, they are not only dead, but forgotten. Caspar Schwenckfeld, the protester among Protestants, the individualist against Lutheran orthodoxy, is nowhere mentioned in the present-day writings of Karl Barth or Emil Brunner, foremost theologians of the new dialectics.

Is there, then, no way of bridging at least the gap between the Schwenckfelders' faith in him and the indifference, or even ignorance, of the scholar?

In this light it is immediately astonishing to see Schwenckfeld treated, outside modern Protestant orthodoxy, in as many different fields as theology, mysticism, history and literature; at least here he is not altogether forgotten as a force in the life of men and the chain of events. It is further surprising if we assume his ideas to be only part of the past, to see the steadily rising number of works on him. And behind dissertations, scholarly essays, and learned articles stands occasionally the conviction—carefully expressed in prefaces or conclusions—that the nobleman from Silesia has a message for our time.

A survey of publications of the last half decade alone shows that Schwenckfeld's name appears in many different countries. In 1959, a study was printed in The Netherlands which centers on the person and work of Christ in Schwenckfeldian theology.\*<sup>2</sup> In the same

\* For full titles, see *Notes and Bibliography*.

## INTRODUCTION

year a paper-back edition of a 1955 dissertation was published in Germany which concentrated on the reformer's anthropology. Two more dissertations of this period deal with his concept of the church and his role in the Reformation in Silesia, respectively. In Sweden, an article was printed on his controversy with Pilgram Marpeck over Anabaptism. In the United States, of course, the publication of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* was continued and is approaching, after more than half a century of scientific labor, its completion. Here research has borne fruit that started before World War I with Rufus Jones, who pointed out in his famous study of spiritual reformers in the 16th and 17th centuries the relationship of Schwenckfeld with the age of Boehme, and which inspired J. J. Stoudt's *Sunrise to Eternity* (1957) noting the affinity between the two Silesian mystics.

But it was in France, it seems, where with Alexandre Koyré the specialist's spell on Schwenckfeld was even further broken. Koyré treated him together with 16th century mystics, spiritualists, and alchemists, with Sebastian Franck, Valentin Weigel and Paracelsus, the great physician, philosopher, and theological rebel. The French scholar's instinct for the meaningful associations may be a leading light; it is not by chance that his book ends with the words "Jacob Boehme." This theosophist we meet time and again; to him, it is obvious, all roads lead, from Schwenckfeld, Franck, Paracelsus, and Weigel, from the medieval mystics and Martin Luther



Boehme stands at the crossroads of thought. Here old ideas converge and new ones emerge; from him later theologies, philosophies, and anthropologies derive their inspiration. Again, it is not by chance that Koyré devoted a separate volume to the shoemaker-theosophist from Görlitz; and we may consider it anything but accidental that Koyré participated in a discussion on Existentialism—indicative of his remarkable range of knowledge and understanding from Plato to Karl Jaspers and Martin Heidegger—in which he observed that there is “an ocean of Nothingness, from which we painfully emerge for a time, but which is always there to swallow us, and in which we are always about to sink” (*A Short History of Existentialism* by Jean Wahl, p. 45).<sup>3</sup> This metaphor of life as a voyage is familiar; but contrary to Koyré’s implication that our voyage on the ocean of Nothingness produces our fear of death, Schwenckfeld or Gabriel Marcel—another participant of that discussion—or any other Christian thinker or Christian “Existentialist” would argue that hope, faith, and love transcend fear and death. The “Nothingness” on which our ship of life sails is but the harbor of God. Similarly, Nicolas Berdyaev, the Russian personalist who often verged on mysticism (just like Marcel) and who also took part in the debate, stresses his relationship to religious thinking as it crystallized in the great awakener of 20th century philosophy, the Dane Søren Kierkegaard for whom “subjective” individualistic religion is more than objective, orthodox, and historical “church-religion.”

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With Koyré, we have found names that circumscribe the sphere in which Schwenckfeld dwells; Kierkegaard's is but a later name in a chain of individualistic, non-sectarian, existence-bound seekers—different as they may be as individuals—which reaches back in the first interval, into the 16th and 17th centuries to Schwenckfeld and related spirits, and in the second interval, to early mystics such as Meister Eckhart, Tauler, and Seuse. Perhaps it takes a courageous mind like Koyré's to support such a survey of the history of Western ideas, in the midst of which we find the tolerant and peace-loving, yet intellectually and religiously bold personality of one Caspar Schwenckfeld; and if Meister Eckhart, Franck, Boehme, Kierkegaard, and some Moderns are treated again in this study it is with a similar sort of courage.<sup>4</sup>

## ❧ 2 ❧

THIS BRIEF bibliographical survey has, in any case, brought out the company of men in which Schwenckfeld is not altogether a stranger. The dice are thrown; the commitment of dealing with the Silesian nobleman as one of the individualistic train of Western thought is made. The counterpart to this group of "left-wing" radicals is to be sought in the group which upholds tradition and in which we find the conservative, orthodox builders of systems, the "right-wing" de-

fenders of existing order. After similarities, contrasts are to be brought out so that we can see Schwenckfeld's place in the history of ideas even more plainly.

Perhaps one may trace this duality of radicalism versus conservatism, at least within the framework of our study, to Socrates-Plato on the one hand, and Aristotle on the other. Socrates, the lonely rebel and thinker whose teaching (like Christ's and other religious founders') was only indirectly conveyed (by Plato in characteristic dialogues, not systematic treatises) and who had a method rather than a system; Socrates put the emphasis on the inductive method, starting with the concrete individual experience and from there proceeding to the general, he stressed conscience (like Augustine), the right life. Socrates-Plato idealism and later Neo-Platonism were, therefore, necessarily influential in mystico-religious tendencies. And Socrates was forced to drink the cup of hemlock. Aristotle, however, exercised greater influence on the scholastic systems, e.g. that of Thomas of Aquinas. The Greek thinker was primarily logician and metaphysician, the cool systematic maker of a universe of ideas with whom emotion-laden spiritualists had little affinity; he was the scientist and realist.

Like Socrates, the man sacrificed, martyrs of Christianity fell under the yoke of the all-powerful state and its institutionalized church-religion. After the constitution of the Holy Roman Empire of German Nationality and the initial crystallization of the European states, the history of ideas presents two remarkable per-

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sonalities whose different intellectual realms struggled with each other for centuries: In Thomas of Aquinas, the schoolman, the universal system-builder emerges, whose structure of concepts is confronted with the sporadic expressions, the occasional sermons of Meister Eckhart, the mystic who aimed at the individual existence of man. To be sure, Eckhart, as a member of the Dominican order, began as a schoolman himself; his Latin writings, fragmentary, though part of a system, were meant to be rational expoundings of the dogma and conceptual reflections about the world as a whole. But the preacher, addressing laymen in his native German language, overcame all rationalism and all scholasticistic striving for definitions and sought the immediate expression of the immediacy in the *unio mystica*, the meeting of the sole man with the sole Godhead.

Historically speaking, Eckhart and his sermons were suppressed until the 19th century; only in a few disciples, in Tauler and Seuse, and indirectly in their followers did he survive in the meantime. The Italian systematist triumphed and reigned for centuries, followed by other systematists. With this pair of personalities, the Latin and the Teuton, the rationalist and the mystic, the systematist and the expressionist, the struggle between what is essentially a preserver on one hand and what is essentially a rebel on the other, was initiated for our culture. It set an example to be followed to the present day, in many variations but in the same key. It was forever the Mediterranean mind against the Gothic mind (these terms not geographically, but typologically

understood); the classifier against the apostillist; the taxonomist against the apostle; in terms of religious history, it was the visible church against the invisible church; the destroyer of the creed of the lonely road to perfection against its founder. It was, in short, always the System against Existence itself.

It is as if Shakespeare has clearly envisaged the difference between the system-builder who attempts to rationally categorize all things and the visionary who fixes upon the non-rationality of life, when he had Hamlet affirm,

There are more things in heaven and earth,  
 Horatio,  
 Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Systematism versus Existentialism—if we may use these terms for our specific purposes—found another set of antagonists in the 17th century in France. Descartes, mathematician and philosopher, set out in his skeptical and analytical fashion to prove that the source of all our knowledge was in the basic fact of the *Cogito* which in turn proves the *ergo sum*: I think therefore I am, is the motto of the extreme rationalist. Nature, to Descartes, could be explained mechanistically; beginning and end, causes and aims, life and death were but parts of a strictly definable machinery (later Lamettrie said “l’homme machine”). The spokesman against this system was Pascal, also a great mathematician. He, however, recognized the limited range of usefulness of science. Instead of rational knowledge, formulated with



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reference—and reverence—to the presumed discovery of general truths that can be rationally communicated from person to person, he set the “reasons of the heart which reason does not understand.” These “reasons of the heart” are solely the possession of the individual, they transcend the reasons of the mind, and they are not transmittable; they are a treasure that everyone has to gain for himself.

It is quite important to note, in this connection, that men like Meister Eckhart or Pascal turned away from science, rationalism, and the systems when searching for more than just ‘laws of nature’, not because of their own mental inability to think scientifically or rationally, but because they, great analytical minds themselves, were acutely aware of the need of transcending the existentially indifferent values of systems toward values which make a difference in one’s personal life. A similar rising above, by the way, took place in 20th century abstract painting (or any other modern form of art): here the artist, a Picasso, was fully capable of painting in the accepted, easily understood realistic fashion of the preceding generation, a fashion, however, which he came to discard because of its complete uselessness in expressing the things that *really matter*.

The differences of outlook were continued, naturally, after Descartes and Pascal, the scientific mind attempting time and again to reduce the whole universe to a few abstract principles while the existential mind was interested only in one question: How can I personally live meaningfully? Kant, in the 18th century, belonged

to the great engineers of philosophical worlds, creative in his own way and opening our eyes to the horizons of knowledge (but the late and unknown Kant, by the way, belongs to the discarders of the system). Johann Georg Hamann, his contemporary, despite his title of "the magnus of the North," a lesser known figure, also from Königsberg in East Prussia, believed contrary to the then prevalent mode of thinking that only faith can make out all things inside as well as outside of us. In these two men, 'Enlightenment' and 'Romanticism'—new terms for the old terms *Ratio* and *Fides*—clashed, and Criticism was pitted against Pietism. This great intellectual struggle in and around Germany came to a culmination in the 19th century, with the philosopher Hegel and the theologian Kierkegaard. The German had elaborated the 'system' of the world-mind manifesting itself in the universe and returning through 'stages' to itself: a magnificent spectacle of cosmos and history brilliantly and most logically presented and of far-reaching consequences, for it was from Hegel that Karl Marx derived his dialectical scheme of historical materialism. But then came Kierkegaard, simply asking 'So what?' What difference does such a system make to man? He polemicized against the cold beauty of the German's rationalistic structure and offered his own version of thought: the philosophy of "existence." With Kierkegaard, this scholastic term assumed its modern meaning and significance. Rather than reflecting upon the entire universe, he concentrated upon the infinitely small point of human existence: upon the crucial problem of how

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to live rightly in the face of the God who may ask from us 'immoral' deeds as were asked from Abraham, the man who was called upon to sacrifice his only son Isaac. In such a situation, only the Incommensurable, an act of faith can save.

It is a peculiar situation of modern theology, philosophy, and anthropology that each of them, as different as each may be from the other, derives inspiration from Kierkegaard. Karl Jaspers is one of his heirs. An anti-systematic himself he has drawn the differences between the 'left-wing' to which he belongs and the 'right-wing' in his own distinctive way; but it is significant that he attempts to combine a "philosophical faith" with "philosophical reason" reminding us of certain tendencies in the 16th and 17th centuries in which faith and knowledge (knowledge of the world as well as of God) were to be united in a mystical, not scholastic, approach. Schwenckfeld and Boehme, the theosopher, were exponents of those movements. Opposite Jaspers, stands the orthodox school of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. As in Luther's time the dogma of the visible church, of the historical Jesus, and of the anti-mystical biblical revelation of the Word is foremost with the systematists.

The systematists, history shows, usually win the struggle against the existentialists, at least in their own days. Eckhart we heard, was rediscovered only half a millennium after his death; Pascal's *Pensées* were published in a halfway trustworthy edition almost two hundred years after his death; all of Hamann's writings have not yet been published; Kierkegaard, the latter's disciple,

was recognized just recently. All of them suffered the fate of the unorthodox or of the more-than-orthodox: suppression, relegation, obscurity, and re-emergence.

As in social so in intellectual history: There appear the creative builders of systems, be they states, philosophies, or theologies, and they are confronted by the opponents of systems. And vice versa: There appear the creative personalities who put all emphasis on the individual life and they are confronted by their arch-enemy the scholasticist—one following the other, coming and going as necessary as the seasons, as generations, classes, cultures. These hostile brothers, Systematist and Existentialist, are but part of the dialectics of the history of ideas, of the ever-recurring cycle, fruitless as far as an ultimate reconciliation is concerned yet not for nothing; for though man may not learn in order to apply his knowledge, he at least remembers. The hostile brothers are, each in his own way, after the Truth, yet each capable only of *his* truth. As Lessing—a man who in the struggle of ideas took the side of the radicals—once said, if God were to ask him what he would rather have, truth or the search for truth, he would answer: The search for truth, because The Truth belongs only to Thee.

Of course, there are in between the two camps men who favor either side or none: a Leibniz, for example, who spent part of his energy on a vast unsystematic correspondence with a nevertheless systematic skeleton behind it, namely, that God's pre-established harmony guarantees the world's worth; and who spent the rest



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of his energy on systematically proving what can not be part of a system: the monadic individuality of man and the nature of moral evil. Both in form and contents, Leibniz stands between extremes, himself an extreme of scope and of genius who tried to bring together medieval monism and Cartesian dualism.

To be sure, this distinction between 'aloof systematist' and 'engaged existentialist' is somewhat artificial, as all historical reconstructions tend toward simplification and over-simplification. The systematist also has an 'experience', a 'faith', before the initial conception of his system; Thomas of Aquinas, Descartes, Kant had their inspiration, their dream, their vision before they sat down to carve out their philosophy. They, too, suffered more than in one instance for their convictions. They too, can be martyrs. But the emphasis here is on the fact—which must be stated again in order to avoid misunderstandings—that they built *systems*, whereas the true existentialist is anti-systematic, aphoristic, expressive if not expressionistic, dissatisfied with logical expositions that wring nought. For the latter it is not so much knowledge which counts but wisdom; not objective scientific evidence but subjective insight; not facts or figures but the essence of a thing; not what we learn but what we feel; not what we do but what we *are*. It is the person that counts, not his work. To the systematist, logic and metaphysics and ethics are his prime concern, the so-called 'great problems'; to the existentialist, it is human fear and hope, suffering and joy, despair and love, disease, mortality, and death which are all-important and



which are the *real* issues. The systematist looks at the world which, by the help of reason, can be construed to be a cosmos, a building of order, of beginning and end, and which is finite; the existentialist looks at one intangible speck of the cosmos, the human soul, which is infinite just as the source whence it springs.

### ❧ 3 ❧

IN THIS dialectics of the history of ideas, Schwenckfeld, the individualist, takes his place opposite Luther, the system-builder, church-reformer, and socio-religious statesman. To be sure, the young Luther, the early rebel and revolutionary, was on the side of the fighting minority; the successful older Luther became orthodox, anti-mystical, intolerant, leader of the ruling majority. As a man anxious to preserve the work of his life, the Protestant faith, he fought and persecuted all who dared speak out against him, among them Schwenckfeld. Luther's successors, the orthodox clerics, persecuted, not long after Schwenckfeld's death, the modest shoemaker-thinker Boehme in whom the Protestants finally had their own mystic, just as Catholic orthodoxy had censured, three hundred years earlier, Meister Eckhart.

Schwenckfeld, together with Sebastian Franck, Paracelsus, Thomas Muenzer, and others, represents the non-conformist in the socio-religious strife of the first half of the 16th century. As a type, he is outsider, 'mystic'.

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He places life over theory, practice over speculation. He is the thinker and theologian, the religious seeker who tries to communicate directly with his fellowmen as well as with his God; more specifically, he is the Christian apostle-type who believes in the possibility, nay, reality of immediate contact with Christ whose message he delivers. He preaches, without fear, what he believes, suffers for it, and forsakes all his worldly belongings and honors for it.

There are countless remarks by Schwenckfeld, the dissenter, against "philosophy" (VII, 367),\* against "sophists and scholastici" (489), and those "philosophers" who say one thing with their mouths, but have something else in their hearts (810). He did not want to be considered to be one of them. Yet, he was not only a preacher, he was also a writer—a writer about theological matters, to be sure, who could not help, either out of tradition or inclination, occasionally slipping into philosophy. In a late letter, for example, in which he differentiates between "man" and "humanity" (XII, 10 f) he concludes with a warning to himself to stop writing in this manner so that he would not become a "sophist" himself. And it is true: if he was a philosopher at all, then he was a philosopher who *lived* what he preached. The gap that exists all too often between a 'system' and the life of the systematizer can not be found in Schwenckfeld.

Within the group of existence-bound believers, there

\* Such figures indicate vol. and page in *Corp. Schwenckf.*; translations are my own.

are, of course, a great number of differently orientated individualists who often oppose each other as bitterly as they oppose the system-builders. As to their type of character, they may be related; as to the content-matter of their creed, they are separated. There are the enthusiasts, spiritualists, pantheists, agnostic nature-mystics, theosophists, pansophists, Christian mystics, and many more. As far as Schwenckfeld is concerned, a clear-cut 'classification' of his teachings has never succeeded. He has been grouped, erroneously, with Anabaptists; he was called, in his own time, an enthusiast ("Schwärmer"), and as to his mysticism there are easily a dozen varying interpretations. However, there seems little doubt that scholars who see in him an anti-mystic or at least a definite non-mystic are mistaken (cf. P. L. Maier, *C. Schwenckfeld*, etc., p. 98).<sup>5</sup> He considered himself as standing in the German mystical tradition, as his numerous quotations from and allusions to Tauler prove, quotations which can be found from his early writings to his last.

That mystical tradition rests, mainly, on Meister Eckhart who was unknown to Schwenckfeld but whose teachings, vocabulary, and general spirit lived on in Tauler, Seuse, the *Theologia Germanica*, Nicholas of Cusa, and others.<sup>6</sup> The young Luther who gave Schwenckfeld the initial reformative experience published, by the way, the *Theologia Germanica* in 1516. Schwenckfeld, then, stands in the middle of the movements which continued German mysticism under the Protestant banner and which received a special impetus

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through the novel interpretation of man's will. Franck and Paracelsus are the major personalities with whom Schwenckfeld personally associated; references to the former's writings abound in the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*, but mostly in a critical vein. It will be one of the tasks of this book to show similarities and differences between Franck and Schwenckfeld as well as between the latter and Boehme on whom all the mystics of the Reformation period had a certain influence.

But it was also the cultural environment as a whole that had its bearing upon Schwenckfeld: the city of Strassburg, in which Eckhart lived for a time, in which Tauler was born and where he died and which gave shelter to the refugee from Silesia; the city of Ulm where Seuse wrote his life and where he died two hundred years before Schwenckfeld. Inversely, there is Schwenckfeld's bearing *upon* the culture of a province, i.e. Silesia whence he came and whither his ideas returned in order to flower out together with those of half a dozen other mystics (Boehme, Franckenberg, Czepko, Angelus Silesius, Kuhlmann, Zinzendorf).

All this is, to say the least, outward evidence of Schwenckfeld's place in the history of German mysticism. But what type of a mystic was he? And—what do we mean by 'mysticism'?

There has never been a clear-cut definition of mysticism, and there is hardly going to be one; just as the mystical contents-matter—the *unio mystica* of God and man—is in the last analysis beyond definition, so is the literary form of mysticism. Mysticism has placed itself

deliberately outside the circle of scholastic distinctions; if mysticism were definable, it would cease to be mysticism. Consequently, we are obliged to judge the mystic *per se*.

We are no longer under the compulsion, as earlier writers were, to defend Schwenckfeld *against* mysticism; the danger that mystics are confused with occultists has been greatly reduced since the advent of intensive research on Meister Eckhart and his successors in the last generation.<sup>7</sup> We have come a long way from 19th century contentions that all religious phenomena must be understood psychologically only. Still, we are confronted with the fact that we do not know what a mystic, or mysticism, *is*. Therefore, mystics and mysticism have to be judged empirically rather than rationally; by observation rather than by definition; by 'feeling', if it must be, rather than by a priori knowledge. Schwenckfeld came, as we have seen, from an area that was destined to become the center of Protestant mysticism, and he went to an area that had been the center of Catholic mysticism; but as a 'mystic', and as all mystics before and after, he actually stood outside any recognized church, defying any definition even from a historio-theological position. He was a non-denominationalist. His "Middle Road"—as he saw it—is the royal road between fixed religious institutions, a road which is Christ, invisible yet bound by the visibility of established churches.

And then: What type of a mystic was he? Was he a 'pure' mystic as Meister Eckhart was one? Or Tauler,



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his great example? Or Boehme, his greatest successor? These men were speculating philosophers, preachers, and existence-conscious leaders of little conventicles. Schwenckfeld, however, despised speculative philosophy although he was not always free from abstract inquiry either; but at least he distrusted metaphysics and, above all, he had no inclination to put as much value on the written word and experimental thought-schemes as the 'pure' mystics did. He was a preacher and existence-conscious leader, indeed, but as far as his publications are concerned, they remain more or less within the realm of theology and a conservative vocabulary. The novelty of his thoughts was in their contents exclusively; even a word like "Stillstand" (denoting the suspension of the observance of the Lord's Supper) was new only in its meaning.<sup>8</sup> For such typically mystical statements as "God and I, we are one" (Eckhart), one will look in vain. Also, one will miss the typically mystical expression of paradox and tautology as a means of saying the unspeakable. We do not find exalted vision as in the mysticism of women (Mechthild von Magdeburg, Hildegard von Bingen), nor ecstasy (Elsbeth Stigel), nor conscious asceticism; what we do find is religious insight strongly coupled with the conviction that "knowledge" of Christ is necessary, radicalism in theory, and modesty of living to the point of poverty and exposure to the hardships of nature.

There was no creative literary effort on a large scale in Schwenckfeld's writing, as there was with Eckhart, Tauler, and Seuse before, and Boehme after him. Eck-



hart and Beohme were epoch-making literary craftsmen, makers of new words and phrases, influencing the German language for centuries to come. Their linguistic efforts reflected, of course, their struggle with a language which was as yet not capable of expressing sublime experiences; they broke the bounds of traditional word-frames for their new thoughts. Schwenckfeld's efforts in these fields were mostly philological, as when he engaged in his own interpretation of Christ's words, "Hoc est corpus meum"—an interpretation, with subsequent polemics, of the eucharistic meaning of the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine. This subsequent polemics lasted until his death. The word "Stillstand" remained largely a technical and theological term in religious history and was not amalgamated as a general idiomatic term into the German language, contrary to so many originally mystical words which became folk-speech.

The creator of the new German language, if there was a single man responsible for it, was Luther who with his Bible translation inaugurated a new literary age. Schwenckfeld remained in his shadow. But as far as mysticism on the Protestant side is concerned, it was Luther who remained in Schwenckfeld's shadow. This mysticism—and here lies the Silesian's positive contribution—centered around a non-creaturely yet human Christ. For Luther, Christ was both divine and human; as a human person, Christ did not differ principally from any other person, only in degree. Schwenckfeld, however, insisted that Christ had but human appearance and

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was otherwise unlike, in principle and degree, any other creature; in fact, he was uncreated.<sup>9</sup> With this concept we find ourselves in a new epoch of Christological thinking. If we look for elements of Schwenckfeld's mystical Christology, we shall not be disappointed. There is, for example, the theme of the wedding of the bridegroom, Christ, with the bride, the human soul (V, 211; XII, 833). Conceiving of this union more broadly, he speaks also of the Church as the bride of God and as the body of Christ; and it is the godly bridegroom only—not the sacrament or any creature—who makes this bride "fruitful." Through the divine bridegroom's spirit and the human bride's faith (a faith which is God's gift), the two come together (III, 92). Furthermore, there is the repeated assertion that man comes to God "without means"; it is the non-creaturely Christ, the true son of God, born but not created, who receives man directly.<sup>10</sup> A culmination of this teaching is to be found in a late work of Schwenckfeld where he cites Tauler as agreeing "when he writes how God the Father speaks his Word into our soul and thus gives birth to a Son without any outward means: Nobody can move the ground of the soul but God alone" (XV, 165). And he continues quoting Tauler: "God moves the soul without any means, image, or parable."

On the other hand, we have Schwenckfeld's recorded opposition against the contemporary mystic, Sebastian Franck (VI, 45; VIII, 467). We shall see later in what respect he differed from Tauler. Outside his own Christological mysticism, Schwenckfeld remained averse

to any exaggerated and sophisticated paradoxical speculation. The *Theologia Germanica* contained, in his estimate, much that was good but he would have liked to see Christ mentioned more often in it (IX, 319f). Of course, there is not a trace of pantheism in the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*; once he remarks that God wants no communion with any other creature than man (IX, 460).

## ❧ 4 ❧

THE MYSTICS, on the invisible road between the fields staked out for the visible churches, are and remain people of the border, nowhere at home yet always at peace; their sphere is the infinite and their center everywhere.<sup>11</sup> They live in a circle that has no circumference and whose middle point is therefore not fixed; it is the circle that embraces the universe whose heart is the mystic's heart. How can the mystic be 'defined'? Schwenckfeld, in turn, walks on the edge of the invisible road, his realm is the border of the infinite sphere and his center the cross-roads of borders. In other words: He can not even be classified strictly with the mystics. He is one of them, yet not one of them; he shares certain beliefs with them, others he rejects. He is a mystic, and he is not a mystic. If the mystics have perfected the use of paradoxes, only the paradox of paradoxes will suffice to describe Schwenckfeld's position: Mystic and non-

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mystic in one, he defies any absolute historical and systematical grouping.

This ambiguity of Schwenckfeld's position is the cause of the quarrel among scholars as to his place in the history of ideas. It is a sterile quarrel, to be sure, one that takes into account only *a priori* scholastic classifications as if it were *these* that were the measure of all things; the truth that it is *man* for whom classifications are made is forgotten. Treating Schwenckfeld like the individual, and individualist, that he wanted to be, we must simply accept the fact of his mystical as well as non-mystical nature—a fact which is so hard to see for the otherwise 'factual', rationalistic, systematizing, 'scientific' mind. Schwenckfeld himself was confronted with a similar difficulty: how to convince his opponents of the paradox of Christ's non-creaturely humanity.

Schwenckfeld, the exponent of Christ's non-creaturely humanity, the mystic and non-mystic, can be properly understood only if we attempt to place ourselves in the midst of his teaching. That excludes—in the framework of this study—criticism, yet does not imply confirmation. It only means—understanding. In the last analysis, an objective communication of his ideas, mystical and non-mystical at the same time, is impossible, just as Schwenckfeld's teaching in his life-time was fruitful for believing souls exclusively. Schwenckfeld distrusted the spoken word, anyway; even the historical Bible simply constituted the *recorded* word of God (and not God's own word) and was therefore subject to error. This approach of his to the most sacred

book of Christianity helped to destroy, by the way, the mediaeval mysticism of the Bible as the direct mouth-piece of God. The spoken as well as the written word are merely outward phenomena which mean little; it is from within, from one's core that anything of more than material significance can take place. Once asked whether the ministers of Strassburg preached the word of God rightly, Schwenckfeld evaded a direct answer and pointed out that only the preacher himself could possibly know of the sincerity of his faith. There is but one essential communication: the one between the individual and Christ, and of this no other person is a witness.

As a type, Schwenckfeld is a mystic; as an individual, he is mystically inclined but not always mystically definable. Throughout his writings, we find the mystical term "Gelassenheit"; it stems from the mystics around Meister Eckhart for whom it means "resignation" of one's will and complete surrender to God or the Godhead. To Schwenckfeld, it means "devotion" and "inner" surrender to God; with him and after him, the word assumes more and more a psychological content. In this single expression we can see both Schwenckfeld's attachment to and detachment from German mysticism, a detachment that is not only his own but of a whole new generation. In Schwenckfeld, however, the distance from earlier forms of the *unio mystica* is even greater and "Gelassenheit" has ceased to take a central place in his theology.<sup>12</sup>

If we wish Schwenckfeld's mysticism-and-non-mys-



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ticism to be brought into something resembling terminological harmony, we have to do it negatively and have to call him a *negative mystic*.<sup>13</sup> A mystic he is, but of the negative type: he writes, as we heard, about the union with God or Christ, but he never relates such an experience. His *negative mysticism* can not be an end, but can only point out the possible road; it contains some mystical elements, but it does not throw itself into the great mystical stream. Like "negative theology" from Dionysius Areopagita to some moderns, which believes in God but refuses to name Him, negative mysticism believes in the mystical union but is reticent about its possible experience. This negative mysticism of Schwenckfeld is not to be confused with the Eckhart-school of mysticism which prefers the negative dictum. The latter insists on the surrender of man's creaturely existence, on the union with the great Nothing; the former holds to the view that man as a person must approach God or Christ as persons.

From other viewpoints than mysticism, such a 'negative classification' of Schwenckfeld as "negative mystic" is, naturally, unsatisfactory. As far as a contrast of Schwenckfeld and Protestant orthodoxy is concerned, the knight's spirituality stands out clearly, and from this viewpoint we may 'classify' him—again unsatisfactorily—as a *positive spiritualist*.

But a fast and definitive 'classification' of Caspar Schwenckfeld is not only impossible, it is actually undesirable; for we do not want to forcefully change the man to fit the costume. We have just one purpose: to

do justice to an individual. In the last analysis, men of the stature of Schwenckfeld can be treated but as individuals. Although a child of his time, dependent upon Luther's initial reformatory thrust, although subject to forms of expression the age demanded from him, and subject to a peculiar pattern of culture—a blend of Reformation spirit, Humanistic learning, Renaissance awakening in the moment of Germany's transition from youth to maturity—, Schwenckfeld nevertheless was able to transcend the epoch, as we shall see in the 'influence' which he exerted upon following generations and later centuries.

## ❧ CHAPTER ONE ❧

### *Schwenckfeld's Life, Thought, and Times*

SCHWENCKFELD, the religious reformer, was born six years after Martin Luther and five years after Zwingli, almost a decade before Melanchthon and two decades before Calvin; 1489, the year of his birth, lies in the center of the new life of a new generation. As a writer, one of the most prolific that his time or any other has seen, he was a part of the Gutenberg-Age that had produced, between 1450 and 1500, not less than one thousand printing presses totaling in output more than thirty-five thousand different publications with a circulation of about ten million copies. He was a contemporary of the historical Faust who was to become not only the symbol of his epoch, struggling for new horizons, but of Western Civilization as a whole—as reflected in Goethe's drama *Faust* and termed "Faustian" by Oswald Spengler—, the symbol of our pilgrimage on earth.<sup>14</sup>

These three elements: reformerdom, authorship, and

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spiritual search constitute the most important parts of Schwenckfeld's life.

During Schwenckfeld's childhood in Silesia, Columbus reached the shores of the new world which was to become the haven of later Schwenckfelders. When he was four years of age, the revolutionary philosopher and physician Paracelsus was born. They later met in Strassburg. When he was nine, Savonarola of Florence was burned at the stake, foreshadowing the hardships of the life of the crusading evangelist. Ten years after his birth, the greatest fellow-mystic of the early 16th century, Sebastian Franck, came to see the light of the world, a light which for both men would soon become the darkness of persecution and the night of hide-outs in caves.

The beginning of the 16th century was the reign of Maximilian I, "the last knight," who from 1508 until 1519 was emperor of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, which then was decaying and was gradually replaced, from below, by the growing German states. The increasing unrest of the peasants culminated in the Peasants' War which may have been no surprise to Schwenckfeld who, though knight and nobleman, always took an interest in the welfare of the people. At the same time, the epoch was rich with great creations. Dürer was the outstanding artist of the age. Ulrich von Hutten exclaimed "It is a joy to live!" although he died miserably of the new "French disease." And in between good and bad fortunes, in the shadow of black and white magic, astrology and alchemy,

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smaller yet no less significant events took place, as for example the invention of the pocket-watch.

When Schwenckfeld, the "first knight" of modern faith, was just about to leave the lap of the family, the young Luther, in 1505, entered the Augustinian Monastery of Erfurt. The student years led the Silesian to Cologne and Frankfurt on the Oder after 1507, where he became acquainted with Hutten. Luther, during the next decade, matured to his mission, nurtured by Bible studies and the humanistic learning of the age. In 1516, Erasmus edited the New Testament in its Greek version. Both Luther's later translation and the Dutchman's edition were diligently read by Schwenckfeld in the beginning Twenties. The personal break-through for Luther and the times came on the eve of All Saints Day, October 31, 1517, when the Augustinian monk posted his 95 theses on the door of the "Schlosskirche" in Wittenberg. The last leaf of October became henceforth the Day of Reformation on the German Protestant calendar. Up to this day, Luther's verses are heard,

"A mighty fortress is our God."

As for Caspar Schwenckfeld, after 1511 the counselor at the courts of various princes, the general spiritual awakening came to him in 1518, soon after the Wittenberg event. His own specific awakening, however, the "divine visitation" or "mystical experience," the break-through of his own peculiar ideas did not occur until 1526 after Luther's sending harsh letters to him in regard to his new interpretation of the Lord's Supper.



From this time on he recognized that he could no longer spiritually follow any man. He knew that he had to pursue his own religious views. Between his first and second experience, other things happened which must have driven him strongly toward independence and isolation. In 1519, his father died, an event which turned his imagination toward transcendental parentage. Luther's letter of 1520 to the German nobility on their rights and duties, was read by Schwenckfeld who felt his responsibility as an aristocratic landlord toward the villagers; while the monk wrote that nobody should be idle at someone else's work, the nobleman said more particularly that the peasants "are to eat eggs, cheese and butter on Friday or in Lent, while they have actually hardly any bread on their tables" (Selina G. Schultz, *C. Schwenckfeld*, p. 12).<sup>15</sup> But while Luther saw the plight of the poor, yet betrayed the German peasantry in their war of 1524-1525, Schwenckfeld actually joined their way of life and went homeless till his days' end. Indicative of his independent position are his earliest extant letters between 1521 and 1524 which express original ideas based upon individual Bible study. While the Silesian was a courtier of Duke Frederic II of Liegnitz, the unknown little Augustinian monk, Martin Luther, showed what one single man could accomplish when he went to the Imperial Diet of Worms and there, on April 8, 1521, broke out into the words: "Here I stand, I can not do otherwise, God help me, Amen!" In subsequent seclusion, Luther translated the New Testament into German.



Schwenckfeld's relation to Luther remained ambiguous. Spiritually freed with the help of the latter, he would not be bound by him; encouraged by the elder's stand and work, he had the courage to take his own stand and embark upon his own enterprise. Supported by the atmosphere of Wittenberg in the beginning, he made a visit to the city which brought about the cleavage between the two men. In 1525 a conversation took place between Schwenckfeld and Luther with a discussion of the Eucharistic problem; the following communications resulted in the Silesian's withdrawal from Lutheran orthodoxy. Later in his life, he attempted a reconciliation with the head of the Reformation only to be rejected and insulted in the most un-Christian manner. Then Schwenckfeld resigned himself to martyrdom.

Another phenomenon that accompanied Schwenckfeld's choice in the religious struggle of the times was his impaired hearing. In 1523 he had already officially left court-life; one reason for it was his increasing deafness which also physically justified his reliance on the "inner word." His constant emphasis on the "inner hearing," upon the mental or spiritual ear lead over to his general spiritualism which set him off conspicuously from the doctrinarians of either side. He once said that, if the external word were alone valid, deaf people and children would be excluded from heaven (II, 678). "Faith does not rest upon any man's word, but upon the living word of God which nobody can hear well unless he has spiritual ears to hear . . ." (V, 126).

And he coins two words which should not be forgot-

ten: "Not the hearer, but the doer is saved;" and, we should hear with the "ears of our heart" (VI, 41, 42).

Like a Boehme who sold his shoemaker shop in order to devote himself to thinking, like a Spinoza who would rather polish glass in retirement than be part of the all too busy world, Schwenckfeld made his existence conform to his theory. He gave up his position, his estate, he never married; the life of secular worries was no longer his. Exile, wandering, suffering, ostracism, sickness, and lone death were the stations on his voyage. The road that he travelled was not the common highway; he went into the thicket.

Schwenckfeld's theology of the "Middle Way" is a slightly misleading concept: he was actually not a mediator between Catholicism and Protestantism, between Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin. In the question of the Eucharist, the old church as well as the new church thought Christ to be present in the bread and wine, while the Swiss reformers leaned toward a symbolical interpretation. Schwenckfeld, however, was considerably more radical, pointing out the mystical-spiritual meaning of the Lord's Supper. Rather than standing *among* the various schools, he transcended them and stood outside; he made the one important step beyond them which carried him in the direction of the mystical-spiritual religion with ancient roots and future branches. The event that made him enter, as an independent and leader of congenial minds, the history of ideas was the publication of the circular letter by himself, Valentin

Crautwald (the Liegnitz humanist), and the Liegnitz brethren on April 21, 1526. In it was announced the intention of suspending the observance of the Lord's Supper which, to the Schwenckfelders, had become a new indulgence. This "Stillstand" was to be continued until a correct interpretation of the Eucharist had been achieved. From here on Schwenckfeld became the apostle of the "Middle Way" between the feuding Christian (or un-Christian) parties; but as we see it today, his way went past them.

Schwenckfeld never attended the Lord's Supper again.

## ❧ 2 ❧

IN 1528, Zwingli in Zurich looking for sympathetic minds in his Eucharistic controversy with Wittenberg, published Schwenckfeld's tractate on the Lord's Supper (*Ein anwysunge das die opinion der leyplichen gegenwertigheyt unsers Herrens Jesu Christi jm Brote . . . gericht ist*) without the author's consent.<sup>16</sup> On account of the opposition against this book, Schwenckfeld left Silesia one year later and went to Strassburg on the Rhine. He never returned to his homeland although he often wished to (in 1542 he writes, "I am willing to go to my fatherland, to Silesia", VIII, 230). It was the time of Luther's and Zwingli's discussion at Marburg which left the cleavage between the two reformers re-

garding the Eucharist as large as ever, but otherwise brought them together more closely.

In Strassburg, Schwenckfeld met many important men, among them Paracelsus, Karlstadt, Sebastian Franck; Swiss reformers; Anabaptists; and people like Adam Reisner and Alexander Berner who were to become his most loyal followers. Here he had a most fruitful time in writing, debating, maturing; ideas grew like the one on free will, a will which he denied together with Luther but which he granted the "reborn" man in Christ, or like the one on infant baptism, a ceremony which he refuted for the same reasons as the Lord's Supper. Zwingli's death in 1531, however, foreshadowed graver things to come. In 1533 Calvin was driven out of France (it was the year of the birth of Valentin Weigel, the mystic between Schwenckfeld and Boehme with the greatest influence on the latter). In the same year, Melchior Hoffmann was sentenced by the Strassburg Synod to life imprisonment for his Anabaptism; he died in prison six years later. In 1535, the "Realm of the Anabaptists" in Münster was bloodily wiped out. Schwenckfeld himself had been driven out of Strassburg two years before by his antagonist, Martin Butzer, who himself was to flee in 1549 to England (but here intolerance reigned just as strongly as anywhere else: in 1524 the 'heretic' William Tyndale, translator of the New Testament, had left). Friedrich von Logau, a later compatriot of Schwenckfeld, said a word which applies to his or any other time:

"Lutheran, Popish, Calvinistic—these beliefs, not one but three are there; however, there is still a doubt where Christendom then be."

After his second exile and for the rest of his days, Schwenckfeld's main abode was in and near Ulm, in Swabia, whose beautiful Gothic cathedral with the highest spire in Europe was not finished until 1494 after more than a century of building. The religious, mystic impulse of the Alemanni (Swabians, Swiss, Alsatians) proved to be congenial to the Silesian; here had been the realm, three hundred years ago, of Tauler and Seuse. Another important city he visited was Augsburg where the richest families of the Empire, the Fugger and Welser families, lived. The university town of Tübingen—today still active in Schwenckfeld research—arranged a colloquy between our dissenter and a number of Protestant conformists in 1535 during which the former refused steadfastly to acknowledge anyone to be a genuine Christian, including the preachers of the gospel, because a Christian was only acknowledged by God. The real, the inward Christian could not be attested by an outward witness. But one year thereafter, the Wittenberg *Formula Concordiae* brought Protestant-Lutheran orthodoxy its final victory in the unionistic movement, heralding the supremacy of the outward word. The liberal supporter of the Reformation, although a Catholic to his end, Erasmus of Rotterdam, died in 1536.

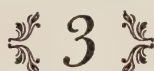
In Ulm, the Protestant antagonist, of little Christian spirit, who compelled Schwenckfeld into hiding, was



Martin Frecht (bringing the hostile Martins to three). In 1539, Schwenckfeld officially left the city, later to return in secret. From Rome, Pope Paul III accelerated the Counter-Reformation by approving the Society of the Jesuits in 1540, then by introducing the inquisition into Italy, establishing censorship and the Index; while Schwenckfeld was busily writing treatise after treatise. In Justingen Castle near Ulm, he had found a haven until 1547. (Here a Schwenckfelder community was sustained; the von Freyberg family undertook, after the leader's death, the publication of his works in four folio volumes, 1564-1570.) During these relatively secure years in Justingen, secure, that is, in hiding, interrupted by secret journeys in South Germany, events of far-reaching consequences took place in the world at large. Copernicus published in 1543, the year of his death, his theory of the sun as center of the planets, taking man and earth physically out of the middle of the universe, while inversely humanists created the intellectually anthropocentric philosophy with man as the thinking middle of the same universe—a philosophy that leads over into the world of man created by Shakespeare and Goethe, by Descartes and Kant. Schwenckfeld, too, participated in the transformation of medieval theocentricity into a new *Weltanschauung* which, in his case, became the new Christocentric religion. Half a decade after Copernicus' death, Giordano Bruno was born, who was burned at the stake, half a century thereafter, for his 'heretical' conception of a panentheistic cosmos. And an event that must have shaken Schwenckfeld deeply



occurred in 1546: Luther died. At the same time, the Schmalkaldic Wars began which ended with the peace of Augsburg, 1555. Other people close to Schwenckfeld died in 1541 and 1543, respectively: Paracelsus and Sebastian Franck.



A LETTER and booklet sent to Luther by Schwenckfeld via friends in Nürnberg in 1543 provoked a violent answer by the reformer; the communication, however, was addressed to the innocent messenger. This man, upon his return, was arrested and placed in irons. Thus, Schwenckfeld whose position became more and more that of a hunted person, assumed many different pseudonyms in order to protect himself: Casper Greyse-necker, Dr. Eliander, Cristoff Reichert, etc.; and for the secret transmission of his increasingly large number of letters he used trustworthy friends. In 1550 he reports writing several hundred letters annually to the various conventicles which worshipped in his spirit. In this year, the most industrious of all his followers was born in Liege, Belgium: Daniel Sudermann, collector and editor of his works, harborer of German mystical manuscripts, poet, and hymn-writer. After the inauguration of Pope Julius III and in the wake of a church reform, the Catholic Eucharistic philosophy of Thomas

of Aquinas was confirmed; the counter-reformation strengthened its backbone.

Schwenckfeld was an outcast. He was rated with the devil, was called foolish and mad, and considered worthy of the stake. A follower, Neff of Connstatt, was cast into the tower. The propagation of the Silesian's doctrine was forbidden, the circulation of his books banned. In 1547, during the campaign of the Emperor against the Schmalkald League of Protestant Princes, the Imperial Army entered Ulm. Castle Justingen was confiscated. Owner and guest fled. Frederic, Elector of Saxony, threatened to hang Schwenckfeld if he entered his territory. On a journey, the latter narrowly escaped the bailiff of Nürnberg who was on a search for him. A sick man, he found refuge, unrecognized, in the Franciscan Convent of Esslingen near Stuttgart which cared for the ailing; he still continued writing and occasionally travelled incognito in South Germany. In 1553, Servet, whom he had met in Strassburg was burned as a heretic at the instigation of Calvin. "This horrifying act was sanctioned not only by Melanchthon, and Brentz but also by Andrea, Frecht, Marbach, Diller, Pistorius, Rungius, Maior, Musculus and the other prominent preachers in Germany and Switzerland. . . The adversaries of Schwenckfeld tried to bring upon him a like fate. . . Schwenckfeld, be it known, did not sanction the execution of Servet, or any other religious executions, or persecutions" (XIII, p. XIII).

While the Silesian deserves a prominent place in the history of tolerance, the political events of the Fifties

tended to eliminate tolerance altogether.<sup>17</sup> The Peace of Augsburg granted the various territorial rulers unlimited religious power over their population, for "cujus regio ejus religio". The legal co-existence of Catholicism and Lutheranism was established at the cost of individual freedom of expression. Schwenckfeld was now completely isolated. He appears to have been secretly in Ulm (1552-1554), residing in the house of the Streicher family. The Duke of Württemberg had, in 1554, called for his arrest. But until the end of his days, Schwenckfeld managed to escape all persecutors and maintain his literary and pastoral activity; with his relatives and friends in Silesia he kept up his correspondence. Only one month before his death, he wrote his last letter.

He died in Ulm, December 10, 1561. Since 'heretics' were not granted a Christian burial, he was probably laid to rest under the Streicher house.

Others carried on in his spirit. Without perhaps being aware of it, we may all have been touched by Schwenckfeldian words. Johann Sebastian Bach incorporated, in his universally understood music, Adam Reisner's hymn "In dich hab ich gehoffet, Herr". At Christmas, we may have heard or read the poem which Daniel Sudermann adapted from Tauler, "Es kommt ein Schiff, geladen bis an sein' höchsten Bord, trägt Gottes Sohn voll Gnaden, des Vaters ewigs Wort".<sup>18</sup>

Fourteen years after Schwenckfeld's death, Boehme was born. Near Strassburg where Sudermann died in 1631, Philip Spener was raised who became the leader of Pietism in the 17th century. Although the Counter-

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Reformation and the ensuing Thirty Years' War wiped out Schwenckfeld conventicles in the German Southwest, and although Christian—Catholic as well as Protestant—intolerance forced the Silesian Schwenckfelders out of their country, the reformer's ideas remained in the minds and memories of some. These few helped Schwenckfeld's spirit to persist despite hostile or indifferent trends of history.

## ❧ CHAPTER TWO ❧

### *The Eucharist: Spiritual Consumption and Negative Mysticism*

IT HAS BEEN said of a genius that he is creative of only one idea, and everything else he produces is variation. To Schwenckfeld, whether genius or not, hardly anything mattered more than his interpretation of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Eucharistic question separated him from Lutheranism at an early date, continued to take a central place in his Christology, and stimulated him to write treatises on the subject until the last years of his life (e. g. 1559, *Corp. Schw.* XVI, 65, 1018, 1047; and 1560, XVII, 309-313).<sup>19</sup>

This question dominated the man and his work.<sup>20</sup> It is one that has always been treated with special attention by Christian thinkers, from early Eucharistic controversies in the 4th century, over the great struggle during the Reformation period up to present-day theological polemics. Around 1900, the Catholic Church began a reform of the liturgy; Pope Pius X, "the pope of the Eucharist", fought against all-too liberal modernism;



Pius XII in his *Humani generis* of 1952 defended the "real presence" of Christ in the sacrament and turned against those who would make the consecrated species merely efficacious signs of the spiritual presence of Christ. For ten years, from 1947 to 1957, the Protestant Churches (Lutheran, Reformed, Union) of Germany discussed the communion problem and finally drew up the *Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen*.

The consumption of the body and blood of Christ in bread and wine—here Christians united in the idea and separated in its practice and interpretation.

But the idea, at least, is not narrowly Christian; it is universal, it is one—in one form or another—that belongs to the various cultures of mankind. Body and blood, bread and wine: these are elementary human realities and old symbols of man; they are sacrament and mystery. Flesh and soul, matter and spirit: in nature's body which is bread, and in nature's blood which is wine, they found form and shape. Bread, eaten, changes from the profane to Life itself, and wine, drunk, completes the mystery.

Modern or ancient, 'civilized' or 'primitive', man is man, and as such he presents eternally the problems: the problems of body arrested in matter and of blood running between birth and death. While man remains man in ever asking the same questions and ever giving the same answers, he changes in so far as the answers are clad in different tongues and dialects. Man is man, but culture changes. Man is eternally hungry and thirsty, but bread is baked and broken according to a custom

and wine is grown and consumed according to a fashion.

It is obvious now what we propose to do: trace the Christian Eucharist to 'Paganism'—but may we do that? Is it at all possible, historically speaking, to link one to the other? And if so, what do we really achieve? What service do we do Schwenckfeld? At least, to answer the last question first, we shall see that Schwenckfeld's preoccupation with The Sacrament was a preoccupation with mankind as a whole.

If we view human history, not as a progressively upward and straight line, but as a circle from birth to death and from death to birth, then man—at any point of the circumference—is equally far from, or close to, the center. The right to hold this view stems from man's static humanity. In such perspective, the ceremony around Body and Blood, Bread and Wine may change before our eyes as cultures change, its interpretation may vary; its focus, however, remains unaltered, like man. This focus, or essence, is the belief, it seems, that man can communicate in one way or another with his origin—whence he comes and whither he goes—without the necessity of total surrender of his timely individuality, i.e. without death.

Thus, if we look at pre-Christian rites in which 'eucharistic' elements play a certain role (and 'Eucharist' means but 'Thanksgiving'), we are not trying to detect any 'influence' of the earlier upon the later; rather, we are simply pointing out human similarities in different cultural environments.<sup>21</sup> We are simply repeating the old

truth of the equation: Man is Man, Body is Bread, and Blood is Wine.

If genius in his creation of *one* idea is monographic to the point of monomania, then mankind is even more so. Mankind has concentrated its eyes on salvation—in whatever form it may be.

With the need for salvation, at whose base we find fear and faith, there has gone hand in hand religion and ideology, art and philosophy, all of which can be observed in ritual, ceremony, festival, and symposium.

The sacramental offering certainly is one of the most important institutions of any religion. Whatever the offering was (vegetable, animal, or even human) matters little; the nature of the sacrifice was not essentially altered by the sacrificed medium. The purpose of the act was, in so-called 'primitive' religion, to magically gain power, health, victory, a good harvest, good luck generally; but it must not be surmised that only secular goals were striven for. There was always, explicit or not, manifest or not, recorded by our historians or not, another dimension beyond the four that the modern scientist knows: the dimension of timelessness or the absolute, the realm of the gods.

In the eating of, and identification with, the worshipped totem animal, for example, which was supposed to be father, ancestor, and god, a union with the origin was to be achieved. This totemistic communion meal is not so remote from our way of thinking as it may seem upon first glance. The motif, at least, has survived in modern literature (and totemism generally is still exist-

ent in thousands of superstitions and animal charms); in one of the best known, most widely read, and most often interpreted stories of our time the archaic is brought to the attention of the present mind. It is a story that has been set to music and ballet, filmed, and reproduced in various ways: *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka.<sup>22</sup>

Here a man wakes up one morning to find himself transformed into a bug. The totemistic implications of the plot are immediately clear although they do not in any way exhaust the meaning of the novella. What is important to our study, however, is this: that one of the two most common factors in the life of man, loneliness (the other factor, equally common, is sociality), has been brought out in an 'absurd' manner, the metamorphosis. This fundamental change has struck at once at the roots of the sympathy and understanding of the 20th century reader. Consciously or subconsciously, the reader has grasped in the opening lines of the work the import of the theme. 'Animal totemism' has here 'served', in an artistic creation of the first order, to enlighten man as to his precarious situation on earth. At any moment of our worldly career, the balance may shift; at any moment, we may fall. We are always at the mercy of sudden and dramatic action 'from above' (or 'below'). We have no ultimate security. We are lost, helpless, and 'toward death'. What are we, anyway? 'Man'? A mere word. A by-name.

The fact that the man-bug dies at the end of the story, makes our exposed existence even more obvious.

Kafka, a deeply religious and morally conscious 'outsider', has indeed succeeded in linking an old subject with our present—eternal—situation. But he has not, did not want to, or could not give any assurance that there was, in the forlornness of the individual, the possibility of salvation—not any explicit assurance, anyway, unless we consider the very act of the metamorphosis and the consequent death to be the doorway toward that realm where love, faith, hope are rewarded.



WE ARE NOW, by way of a detour, aware of the typicalness of the communion meal and of the many different forms it may take. The Eucharist, this is certain, concerns man's life at its core. Together with the sacrament of Baptism, it has remained the pillar of Protestant ritual.

"If totemism was once universal, then its communion rite also was universal, and the various forms of subsequent sacramental communion might confidently be traced back to it" (W. M. Groton, *The Christian Eucharist and the Pagan Cults*, p. 14). Although there may be no 'proof' of the universal practice of totemism, as Groton holds, man himself with his lasting fear and faith and his corresponding religious culture is evidence enough of the continuity of both animal-worship and communion meal in the sacramental sense. In Chris-



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tianity, the totemistic magical act with transcendental accidents has been transformed into a transcendental desire with accidental magical ceremonies. The emphasis has shifted from rite to meaning. But the great question of the "real presence" of the totem in the offering (which Groton mentions, denying, however, to magical religion any idea of divinity) is similar to the question with which Christians, occupied with Divinity only, have been confronted: whether or not Christ is "present" in the Eucharist; and if so, in which form: physical, symbolical, spiritual. It is a question that has brought rebellion and many schisms into the once united Roman Church and numerous divisions into Protestantism.

The direct roots of the Christian Eucharist remain somewhat obscure. History more often defies causality than underscores it. Jesus, the Jew, after the last meal with his disciples, celebrated the "Quiddush", a Jewish blessing over the wine observed at home on the eve of the Sabbath; in the event of a coincidence of Passover and Sabbath, the "Quiddush" was transferred from Friday to Thursday. In the New Testament, we have various accounts of this meal. St. Paul recalled the tradition of the Eucharist as instituted by Jesus. After centuries of flexibility in the practice of the Last Supper, Thomas of Aquinas—the systematist—cast into scholastic terms what until then had been unorganized theory; St. Thomas' version became, in subsequent centuries, more and more the official and final explanation as given by Catholicism.

Treating of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, St. Thomas affirms that the presence is "after the manner of a substance" ("per modum substantiae", *Sum. Theol.* III. LXXVI. 1 ff); bread and wine themselves remain only "accidental" ("per accidens"). The whole Christ, body and blood, is substantially present in each particle of the sacrament and under each species by concomitance. At the consecration by the priest, bread and wine change "by transition" ("per transitionem") into the body and blood of Christ. The Mass, the offering of the sacrifice by the priest, was and is the center of the Catholic Church.

Exactly this institution and its theory of transubstantiation was challenged by Luther; for him, it was individual man, the believer who took again the original status of priesthood. There was again an immediacy between creature and creator at least as far as the possibility of communication was concerned although otherwise—in respect to God's power and man's weakness—there yawned an abyss. As for the Eucharist, the substance of bread and wine remained together with the substance of Christ's body and blood. The "real presence" of Christ in the elements, far from having been abandoned, had become possible—not through transubstantiation—but through consubstantiation: *He* was present in, under, and with the sacrament. Instead of the Supper celebrated as a sacrifice to God, a promise by God was now received antecedent to our own merit: we were to be forgiven for our sins. This promise was accepted by faith and by faith alone.

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The order of the relationship had now been reversed. While the earlier Christian, in the presence of the essentially all-powerful God, offered humbly a sacrifice because he considered himself at least in this respect a responsible and free agent of his own salvation, free through the imparted grace of God and responsible through the office of the priest; the later Christian, in the presence of the still all-powerful creator, thought himself *not* free to make this offer but only worthy of receiving a promise and its gracious fulfilment. Two changes may be observed here—which will be discussed under different aspects in the next chapter—: One, that the earlier Christian thought himself ‘naively’ *free*; two, that with growing intellectual sophistication, the later Christian of the 15th and 16th centuries (in the beginning of the age of causality-thinking and mechanistic philosophy) thought man to be ‘determined’ and predestined by God, i.e. completely *unfree*. Thus, while the action of the sacrifice in the Catholic Mass as such proceeds from man to God to man, in the Lutheran formula it goes from God to man to God.

Luther, indeed, differed with the original Roman Mass in many things, practical and theoretical, yet he clung to the view of Christ’s “real presence”. A step away from the latter doctrine was made by Zwingli who held the elements to be *signs* of Jesus’ body and blood. The copula “est” in *Hoc est corpus meum* was interpreted as “significat”. Symbolism here entered the Eucharistic theory from the Protestant side. God and Christ were separated corporeally from the ritual. To

Calvin, finally, the elements were, in addition to being signs, also instruments of God's grace to be imparted to the faithful. Still, the corporeal "real presence" was denied.

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WITH Schwenckfeld, actually two different steps were made: one in the direction of spiritual religion and the other in the direction of 'negative' mysticism. In one of his first epistles, on the Lord's Supper of 1527, he states that the taking of the body and blood of Christ has not been observed according to the Gospel. No one may observe the sacrament unless he has examined himself and is of Christian life, unless he has first become a genuine Christian, a Christian of the mind and heart. Salvation inheres in no external attendance of the Supper. If the external rites were decisive, then Judas or any other only outward Christian would be saved too.

There is the famous remark from the Reformation treasure of popular sayings, that if a church mouse should accidentally eat a piece of consecrated bread fallen from the altar, the mouse would be saved like any man. The people felt the issue which Schwenckfeld expressed quite clearly: If there should be salvation, it would have to come through a sincere faith. Hypocrisy was dealt a heavy blow.

*Hoc est corpus meum*—what does it really mean?

Schwenckfeld again and again gave his interpretation of this crucial phrase. While before him the "est" was considered the clue to the understanding (to be translated into the symbolical "significat" or to be left as the "est", referring to the material body), the Silesian reformer put all the emphasis on the "hoc". "*This is my body*"—this, this *spiritual eating*. . . (and he spells the German word in the unusual manner "Daas" with a special accent on the demonstrative). In the Eucharist, Christ's flesh and blood is taken spiritually by the truly faithful and by the faithful only. But: the sacrament is consumed spiritually by the believer at any moment and everywhere provided that he *is* the believer at core; the sacrament is taken inwardly.

One day in July, 1525, some nine months before the history-making circular letter was published by him and his followers, it struck Schwenckfeld that in the spiritual eating lay the real significance. He sat down to write the *Twelve Questions or Arguments against Impanation*.

"Spiritual eating"—not just a spiritual observance of the Supper as with Zwingli and not a mere physical eating as with Luther and the Catholics. In this respect, Schwenckfeld's way is indeed the Middle Road between right and left. But how do we have to understand this "spiritual eating"? It almost seems as if historians, theologians, and interpreters of Schwenckfeldianism have made themselves slightly too easy a task by placing all the emphasis on its spiritualism. The fact of this spiritualistic interpretation of Schwenckfeld's supposed exclu-



sive "spiritualism" is, to most willing listeners, easy enough to understand and logical enough. Spiritual religion—this is generally, to the layman as well as the scholar, the religion of Luther, of the Reformation and especially its sectarians, of the tolerant theology from Pietism over Romanticism and Schleiermacher to the liberal church of the late 19th century. Spiritual religion— isn't this what we *all* have, even perhaps some Catholics nowadays? Isn't this the religion without too much emphasis ('except for the masses') on ritual? A religion which believes as much in a 'walk in the woods and nature as its altar' as in the walk to the cathedral? Isn't the spiritual approach the right thing and ritual just a 'show'? Aren't we all, we enlightened people of the 20th century, aren't we all 'spiritual believers'? Is it not enough, if we have a spiritual religion, to do good deeds in the line of charity?—It seems as if the 'enlightened people' of our time (and *each* age thinks itself superior to its preceding generations) do not know themselves very well, not even in their own actions. As far as Schwenckfeld is concerned, let us take a second look at his intentions.

How do we have to understand this "spiritual eating"? Such spiritual eating is, of course, either a mere metaphor to the literary scholar or, taken verbally, a paradox to the friend of mysticism. Schwenckfeld is quite persistent in using both those words together (II, 253, 447; XIV, 116). This linguistic fact in itself is an indication of the value which he placed on the combination of the two terms. And, indeed, here seems to lie the great and

highly important difference between mere symbolism and symbolical spiritualism on one hand and Schwenckfeld's "spiritual eating" on the other. He himself stated the difference between the Swiss (and others) and his own theory thus:

"For they call *that* to eat Christ's body spiritually when they think, with the uplifting of their soul to God, of Christ's blessings and His sacrifice on the cross; when they are, in the observance of the Lord's Supper, grateful to Him; which acts are, however, better suited as commemoration and declaration of the Lord's death than as *Man-educatio spiritualis* or spiritual eating.

For to eat Christ's body spiritually in the Lord's Supper does not mean to have only religious thoughts and contemplation of Christ's blessings, but it is truly to believe that Christ's body has been given for us and His blood shed for us, Christ being after His glorification completely united spiritually and essentially with God, in spirit, power, and virtue; it is truly to believe that Christ's body is the substantial, essential food of our soul for eternal life, according to the words of the Lord: My flesh is truly a food and my blood truly a drink. John 6:55." (XIV, 116-118.) <sup>23</sup>

For the symbolists, any communion in the Sacrament is with Christ the creature, the human person, and therefore no union other than a meeting of two created individuals can take place. But when Schwenckfeld speaks

of the "Nachtstuhl", it is a coming-together of the spirit of created man with the non-creaturely Christ (although He may have human appearance); it is a union with the true son of God, with God Himself in His own godly son. The difference between Zwingli's "spiritualism" and Schwenckfeld's "spiritual eating" must, in this light, be considered more than a gradual one or a matter of degree: it is rather a fundamental cleavage between a moderate and a radical view.

Yet—Schwenckfeld suspended the observance of the Lord's Supper. The union of Christ and man was to be inward only. But did this inner union ever take place? And if so, in whom? In Schwenckfeld? In others next to him? These questions can hardly be expected to be answered. Schwenckfeld never speaks explicitly of any direct contact with Christ, he never describes—as the mystics before him did—any experience of the *unio mystica*; in this respect, he remains impersonal. Instead, he teaches that this supreme coming-together is possible. He has a belief, a faith, a theory, he has his Christology, his theology—but unlike the mystics, he keeps silent about his personal "Erlebnis". In this respect, he is the rationalist of the 16th century, who places so much value on recognition, knowledge, wisdom, who embraces religious subjects consciously and objectively. He remains, in the frame-work of his Christology, the 'negative mystic' of an age that suspected the private revelations of earlier centuries.

What may Schwenckfelders expect of the inward sacrament? Their apostle tells them that "the faithful

person may through Christ become recipient of such magnificent meal's benefit, strength, nourishment, of such drinking and eating in Christ, every day, indeed every hour and moment, so to speak" (VI, 164). This "so to speak" leads us to think.<sup>24</sup> While it is not metaphorically understood, it nevertheless places a limit on the communion. It means that there is no direct evidence of such everyday union in Christ. Also, the *locus* of the eating is variously represented as "faith in Christ (III, 156), knowledge of him (X, 541), the Holy Spirit's prompting the heart of the Christian to receive, love, and obey his Lord, and the indwelling activity of Christ in the heart (XI, 702) . . . But faith, for Schwenckfeld, was a very pregnant concept, proceeding further than any orthodox definition of the term" (Maier, op. cit., p. 22). This faith was close to mystical intensity, as Maier asserts.

"Eating means tasting in one's heart the good word of God, how sweet it is, and the power of the future world; it means partaking of the essence of Christ through true faith.

The bodily food is transformed into our nature, but the spiritual food transforms us into Itself, that is, into divine nature, so that we partake of it." (II, 574).

In a significant footnote on this page of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*, the editors state, "Our participation in, and change into the divine nature but not by obliteration of our human nature; it is neither an abso-

lute nor an identificational change, but a relative one.”<sup>25</sup> Editorial suspicion of medieval mysticism, already expressed so vehemently in the first volume (p. L f) although interpreting mysticism erroneously, has led here in the right direction at least as far as Schwenckfeld’s reservation about ‘positive mysticism’ is concerned. Even in the above passage, mystical transformation remains an assertion, a description; it is not narrated. And “essence” (“Wesen”) in which we participate—a keyword of Meister Eckhart and his school—also must be interpreted with caution. While in scholasticism and its mystical branches “essence” referred to the divine essence, the later use of “Wesen” (or “wesentlich”) tended to obscure the original meaning and was relativized in religious psychology (just as the term “Gelassenheit” underwent similar changes, see *Introduction*). Partaking in the “essence of Christ” means more and more, in Schwenckfeld’s own words, “tasting in one’s heart the good word of God”, in the human heart where, if anywhere, the sacred union may take place. Later, the famous dictum of the 17th century Silesian mystic Angelus Silesius “Mensch, werde wesentlich” stood open to scholastic interpretation of man’s becoming “divine essence” and to “enlightened” interpretation of man’s leading an “essential, meaningful life” (whatever this life was).

Schwenckfeld himself stood between scholastic theological realism and anti-scholastic spiritualism of his own particular semi-mystical character. The *unio mystica* in his spiritual religion remains real, but didactic; it



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remains really a possibility without verification by direct witnesses. It is a road-and-goal directive. Shall we get on the right road and reach the right goal? If and when there is an actual spiritual eating in the sacrament outside the ceremony through the reborn man in Christ, then there is the real union of man and Christ-God. The 'eating', in other words, is the immediate mystical touch between individual and Christ, a touch that is lacking in mere spiritualism. But since this touch is not openly revealed in any way, the 'eating' is either done, in secret, or is potential. This is Schwenckfeld's negative mysticism.

Schwenckfeld, too, has the 'real presence' of God in the Eucharist; only, the presence is spiritual and the reality is guaranteed by and through the mystical eating which defies outward evidence.

Perhaps this spiritual eating is part of man's future world. Schwenckfeld, in more than mere moderation, often pointed out his own and mankind's imperfection (V, 736; VI, 4, 43), the road that we have to travel regardless of end or success, the eternal road, the process that is our life.

## ❧ 4 ❧

IN STUDYING the literature on Schwenckfeld—this must be said here in order to underline the foregoing paragraphs—we fail to see that this reformer's expounding of the meaning and practice of the Eucharist had

been clearly and fully understood. The "spiritual eating" as negative mysticism and positive Christology had not been seen.

"Spiritual eating", in this view, sets Schwenckfeld off even farther from Protestantism and Catholicism and narrows the possibilities of comparison, while it widens the reformer's own position to that of a man of unusual individual strength.

Modern Protestantism, in most of its outstanding branches, still struggles with the theory of the Eucharist. Has Schwenckfeld's voice been heard? Probably not. However, Luther's die-hard position of bodily presence of Christ in wine and bread and Zwingli's symbolism have, time and again, called for meetings of leaders of both sides. We mentioned in the beginning the result of ten years of discussion of certain Protestant churches, the so-called *Arnoldshainer Abendmahlsthesen*, in this matter. Reaction everywhere was strong. In the United States, Protestant theology scrutinized those *Theses* and the *Concordia Theological Monthly*—one in many—published them together with a translation which throws much light on the present confused state in the question of the Eucharist.<sup>26</sup> What would the 16th century have said to the following text?

"The words which our Lord Jesus Christ speaks in the course of the distribution of bread and wine tell us what He Himself gives in this meal to all who approach His altar. What does He give? He, the crucified and risen Lord, allows

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Himself to be taken by us in His body given into death for all and in His blood shed for all. He allows Himself to be taken by us with bread and wine through His Word of promise. In this way He receives us, by virtue of the Holy Spirit, into His triumphant rulership in order that we, by believing in His promise, might have forgiveness of sins, life and salvation." (1959, 2, p. 86).

Polemically, the *Theses* affirm what the Supper is *not*, namely both a bodily eating and a spiritual eating; here, Schwenckfeldianism is obviously circled out for criticism. Continuing in this vein, we are to be "armed" against "every kind of enthusiasm (*Schwärmerei*) and every degree of lassitude" (p. 87).

Skeptical analysis was provided by Lutherans themselves. Following the publication of those *Theses* are "concluding observations" which "register grave concerns" (p. 88). The above quoted thesis "leaves us in a conflicting maze of thought. It is not clear and definite".

Indeed, compromise was arrived at, but at the expense of clarity. Unity was achieved at the expense of intelligence. What are we to make out of the cited interpretation of the Eucharist? The crucial question whether Christ's body and blood are physically present, spiritually present or not present at all is completely clouded by vague phraseology. It is, therefore, not less than right when the *Concordia Theological Monthly* asserts that "the Lutheran churches . . . are facing a crisis of far-reaching consequence, perhaps another Marburg"

(p. 90). Can Lutherans still hold to Luther's doctrine of the Eucharist?

That is for Lutherans to decide; Schwenckfeld gave his response long ago. Schwenckfeld left a message, and he who wants to hear it is invited to listen.

Where does man of the 20th century *really* stand? Is our religion really a 'spiritual' religion as religiously 'enlightened' people want us to think? Is church ritual really 'only for the masses'? And do not 'the masses' revolt against church ritual just as much as the 'intellectual elite'?

We wonder; man still likes to shudder in front of the illogical, only nowadays he prefers the movies to the church. He still likes ritual and ceremony, only he finds it today on the street instead of in the cathedral. At the same time, in more sober moments, man will laugh at his own likes and dislikes and at his own 'childish' love of pomp. Subconsciousness and consciousness, feeling and reason lie in constant battle with each other. Science has inaugurated a new age of superstitions—superstition of human omniscience and omnipotence. This is man: always the same, full of paradoxes, full of strength and weakness.

Is it not true, then, that such 'magical' phenomena as transubstantiation and consubstantiation have a certain rightful place in church ritual, if man is still and will be the eternal child who desires wonder and miracle? And is it not equally just that transubstantiation and consubstantiation experience ridicule by man who has set himself the motto of "*rerum cognoscere causas*"?

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Here are the two sides, pro and contra. Significantly, the Schwenckfeld community reintroduced the observance of the Lord's Supper after more than three hundred years of the "Stillstand", yet clung to Schwenckfeld's original "spiritual eating" when observing the Eucharist.

As for Schwenckfeld himself, he was of the type of religious reformer who placed the spiritual and his own form of mysticism above the ritual. He did not believe in spiritual magic. He was, in this respect, a champion of the religious elite, a religious aristocrat. Yet in his trust in God he believed in the opportunity of everyone to become a reborn man in Christ, and in this respect he was the apostle of the people. Nobleman and commonman were in him united; he believed in the uplifting of the simpleman as much as in the necessity of humility in the gentleman. Before God, they were all equal to him.

The Eucharist, since those fateful days of the Reformation, has returned whence it came: into the general awareness and culture of man. Body and blood, bread and wine are still and again on our minds. Witness of this is Georg Trakl who in his poem "A Winter Evening" \* has interwoven common reality and the reality of the mysterious to such a degree that the question of "real presence" is well nigh unanswerable.

Snow against the window falling,  
Long the vesper bell is calling,  
See the board for many spread.  
And the house is in good stead.

\* Translated by Eloise Neuse and reprinted with her permission; for original, see Notes.



SCHWENCKFELD, KNIGHT OF FAITH

Many a traveler faring late  
Comes dark paths unto this gate.  
Golden blooms the tree of pardon  
From the cool water in earth's garden.

Wayfarer steps in so still;  
Pain has turned to stone the sill.  
There in purest radiance shine  
On the table Bread and Wine.<sup>27</sup>

## ❧ CHAPTER THREE ❧

### *Freedom of The Will*

SCHOLASTICISM frequently went to extremes in order to prove a point. Ridicule was a logical consequence. Buridan's legendary animal, the ass, standing in the middle between two equally big bundles of hay, starved to death because it couldn't make up its mind which one to eat first. This was to demonstrate that the will needs a *causa sufficiens* in order to move and that there is no absolute freedom of the will.<sup>28</sup>

Is man free or is he not? Few other questions in the realm of metaphysics have attracted so much attention as this. The relationship of freedom and grace, action and fate, decision and compulsion, man and nature, the individual and the substance has given rise to such doctrines as indeterminism or determinism. Eventually, or originally, the human person's relation to God was included in the debate over the *liberum arbitrium*. The problem, however, is still unsolved, is still disputed, and probably will be disputed as long as there is man. Here again is applicable what has been said of the history of

philosophy as a whole: that there is no need to disprove philosophers because they successively disprove each other.

While *liberty* has been a catchword for the metaphysician as well as the politician, there are those who left it alone. Three major considerations suggest themselves which do away with the issue altogether: (1) that it is an artificial one, for man is primarily an acting—or *behaving*—agent, and any speculation about his motivation is unscientific metaphysics and matters little, anyway; (2) that man is both free and unfree in a unique combination, free individually within the realm of personal choice and unfree within the sphere of the determining power of the character of a generation, a class, a society, a culture; but since man is an organic whole the combination remains always intact; (3) that man can transcend his autonomy, if this is what he has, or his dependence, if he is bound, by ridding himself of worldly purpose or worldly causation in finding ultimate rest in his Origin—whether this rest be called perfect sovereignty or complete abdication, is immaterial; it is, in any case, Resignation, Surrender, *Gelassenheit*.

It is with the third consideration, and its variations, that we are concerned here.<sup>29</sup> It has a long history before Schwenckfeld and can be traced in any culture. It is the consideration of the mystic.

In Germany, the master who laid the groundwork was Eckhart (1260-1327). Following the scholastic axiom that man is potentially free, he appealed to the

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individual to use that freedom and turn his life in the right direction. The hierarchy of different voluntarian stages—trivial decisions, malevolence, benevolence, the making up of one's mind for a religious life—culminates in the "essential and eternal willing" and "surrender" with which the creature may reach the outflowing will of the Godhead, the Holy Ghost. But the final absorption in the supreme Godhead Himself (not the Holy Ghost, not the Son, not the Father, as members of the Trinity who are such only in relation to man), the final infiltration into the divine "Nothing" as the unity and image of the Trinity, this ultimate *unio mystica* is reserved for the "Spark of the Soul"—the "Seelenfünkeln" which defies any scholastic or theological definition, rational understanding, or psychological localization, and which is *direct* to and in the Godly Desert.

Eckhart, the Dominican, placed Mind and Spirit over the Will and thus inclined toward the philosophy of Thomas of Aquinas who emphasized the priority of "mens" or "notitia" over "voluntas". Thus, while the will may be free, voluntarism is not Saint Thomas' doctrine; neither is it Eckhart's. But with the latter, the position of the will is more or less fixed and later mystics vary but little (only with Jacob Boehme begins a new era). Tauler, Seuse, the author of the *Theologia Germanica* are Eckhardians. Schwenckfeld stands in the same tradition; there is the Dominican's spirit, modified by Luther's influence in respect to the dogma of predestination.

In reading the literature on Schwenckfeld, it is always astonishing to see how little credit Meister Eckhart has received as the father of German mysticism. Although Schwenckfeld probably did not know of him, it was in Tauler—the great disciple of the Dominican monk—that he experienced him at least indirectly; he felt him in the *Theologia Germanica*. The Schwenckfeld disciple Daniel Sudermann collected Eckhart's manuscripts; Valentin Weigel knew of him; in Boehme, medieval currents joined to be redirected and rejuvenated. Yet, while some scholars have acknowledged the Master's greatness and influence, others either ignored or clearly misunderstood him. When Schwenckfeld edited the *Imitatio Christi*, he came across the term "Lebmeister" (IV, 282) which goes back directly to Eckhart. Should he never have heard of this man when Sudermann, only a few decades after the Silesian's death, began harboring the parchment treasures of medieval German mysticism? When Weigel, born in 1533, knew of him? When Sebastian Franck, whom Schwenckfeld met, cited him? We ask this question not so much because we would like to suggest a causal influence of the earlier one upon the later, but because of the spiritual kinship of the two.<sup>30</sup> In Eckhart, others found a confirmation of their beliefs, not just fodder for their thoughts.

Luther was exposed to Eckhardian mysticism through the *Theologia Germanica*; but with the Reformation, a caesura marked the end of the scholastically defined *liberum arbitrium* and the beginning of the doctrine of predestination. One is almost tempted to say that



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Catholicism could *afford* to proclaim man to be free because in the presence of the tremendous building of the Church—with its apostles, fathers, popes, cardinals, bishops, priests, its confession and sacraments, its angels and saints—man was aware of his actual, diminutive standing; when Luther, however, wanted the individual to be placed directly opposite the distant God with no mediator over the abyss except the creaturely Christ, this enhanced position of the *homo sapiens*—now truly knowledgeable—could not be further glorified by a doctrine of indeterminism. Whatever the historical motivation of the caesura, the age was fundamentally convulsive and bore a new cosmos out of its lap.

Even the new freedom which was proclaimed by Humanism in general and by Erasmus in particular had other roots; the glory and power of man, his autonomy, was declared *despite* the existence of God and no longer because of it. It was not yet an autonomy which cut itself loose from the Creator, as atheism and in its wake solipsism—man His own God—did; it was a new feeling and consciousness of man's ability that put him opposite the Almighty. There was a trust in both man and God that left God all His rights but granted man his freedom. Luther had no such trust; his God was the wrathful avenger of the Old Testament, and his man was the fallen Adam. Both Erasmus and Luther are vis-à-vis eternity: the humanist in peace, and the reformer in anguish. Freedom versus predestination was the issue.

What could the depraved and contingent Lutheran individual hope for? He was put, just as in the theology

of St. Augustine, into the hands of grace. Calvin sharpened the Reformed position to an extreme which is again reminiscent of Buridan's helpless creature: standing in the middle between two strong, possible motivations, namely doing moral good for others' sake or doing physical good only for one's own sake, the creature is lost; because whatever it may do, good or evil, is actually of no consequence: it is beforehand elected or rejected by God. Predestination prevails.

This extreme position has made for strange results. It has led, socio-historically speaking, to the (pseudo-) Puritan indifference in matters of morals of wide circles of the old and the 'new' world with subsequent cynicism and economic materialism—to pseudo-Christianity of the type of the nevertheless church-going society which the Schwenckfeld, the Pascal, the Kierkegaard, each with his own special target, have branded as hypocrisy, bigotry, and self-righteousness.

## ❧ 2 ❧

**B**UT IT DID not take Calvin's extreme to arouse Schwenckfeld. The Silesian had already left Luther's position and stated his own opposite the monk from Wittenberg. Together with the Eucharistic question, the problem of the will may lead us to the compactness of Schwenckfeld's views; the former shows us his central theological concern, the latter his central theo-

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philosophical approach to one of the most intensely argued questions of the 16th century. Slowly, the man and his ideas take their hold in the stream of the history of ideas.

Schwenckfeld's treatment of the issue is complex, if not sometimes confusing. Step by step, we have to follow his line of thought which may have started—unrecorded and unexpressed—with the issue of predestination versus the will in an age that reshaped the image of man. Is man really and completely dominated by preordination, by decrees of the absolute Ruler? It was quite soon in his literary career that Schwenckfeld attacked this view. He criticized the human "wisdom" of blaming, or resting, everything on God; it was not true that the individual has "nothing further to do opposite his Creator" but yield to his once established fate (IV, 91). Fatalism, just as extreme indeterminism, could only lead to arrogance and indifference. The Silesian was aware of the psychological possibility that a person, influenced by the doctrine of predestination, could simply argue that it was of no avail to take any initiative for one's salvation and would therefore sit back lethargically. And here, with this possibility of human reservation of action on his mind, Schwenckfeld initially entered the anteroom of freedom.<sup>31</sup>

But is man really free? A question that he and many others, before and after him, have asked with a troubled consciousness. *Is man free?* A question like a thorn in the flesh.

In the debate between Luther and Erasmus, begun

in 1524, which centered on the *liberum arbitrium*, Schwenckfeld was, so to say, left out. Determinism versus indeterminism—no, the confrontation was not so clear-cut as this to him. Theologically speaking, since Adam's fall and the forfeit of his original freedom toward salvation, man was in a state of utmost depravity. This depravity is the fundamental theological and anthropological situation, then and now. It is the starting point of all religion. The will, if we can speak of one in the proper sense, can actually only do evil (I, 259; II, 162; IV, 652). Schwenckfeld sometimes calls this will free, sometimes unfree; already here we see the blurred borderline between indeterminism and determinism. We are 'willingly driven', in a way, toward evil. There is no free choice of good or God (II, 42, 57). However, in one case we are our own master: in "civil" matters that do not go beyond civil concern and that do not touch the issue of whether we can work toward our own salvation, there is something like a deliberation for or against a certain measure (III, 560). This possibility of making a decision Schwenckfeld calls the "outward" will (IX, 835, 930; XI, 95).

With this approach, another step into the anteroom of freedom is taken. But Schwenckfeld's main concern is with salvation. Salvation is necessary because of man's evil status. But whence does evil come? What is the origin of sin? Since there is hesitation among thinkers like the Silesian to place the beginning of evil in God, and outright refusal to fix the responsibility for salvation in man, we arrive at a dilemma. Man is somehow

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free to do evil because God cannot be the author of sin; but man is *not* free to save himself because redemption is a matter for God's grace.

### ❧ 3 ❧

**H**OW DOES God communicate with the mortal, and how is grace received? The basis of Christian life is faith, and faith derives from the miracle that there is One in whom faith is possible; faith has found an object. Although Schwenckfeld does not phrase the human predicament in such way, it is actually such a 'leap' (in the Kierkegaardian sense) toward the object of faith that puts man in the starting position toward God, or that puts God within reach of man. The objective 'leap' which takes place outside of us—the 'leap' that puts the divine into reality—is Christ's non-creaturally yet human-like appearance on earth. Christ, in whom the "will of the Father is fulfilled" (IV, 92) enables man to believe. In Christ, predestination is materialized; and since Christ came into the world to save man, man's salvation in Christ is part of predestination.

"There are two kinds of will of God, the secret and the revealed. As the former is inscrutable, it cannot easily or properly be experienced; and as the latter is revealed, it must be experienced ["gelebt"] by everyone" (IV, 104). Actually, the question of indeterminism versus determinism is superfluous. As we said in the beginning:



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one of the alternative answers to this question is to deny its validity. Schwenckfeld argues similarly against Luther's school of thought:

“However, since they have taught us that there is no free will toward good deeds, what is now left to us? Would it not be more reasonable to say instead: My dear friend, you must trust in God through Jesus Christ so that you all may have a free will to do all good, not from your own volition, but through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . And if I today should be a *catechisator* or teacher of faith, then I would not tell everybody that he has no free will at all; for he would ask me back: What shall I do then?—Plead to God, I would say.—I cannot plead, he would answer me, for I have no free will, etc.—But enough of this; Our Lord and Master Christ will lead you on through His spirit into truth. Amen.” (III, 27)

Quite early, Schwenckfeld, the mystic, knew that through surrender (“Gelassenheit”), we approach God; if our will is “broken” (“gebrochen”), we arrive eventually at the eternal will (II, 60). Thus, the *newly born* individual—newly born in this life—achieves real, essential “freedom” in Christ. Through faith and *surrender*, the old Adam is left behind. One must always make a difference between the “will of the new, saved man in Christ and the will of the old and damned man” (III, 577).

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Surrender! If man follows this advice, indeterminism or determinism cease to be issues; and in the suspension of earthly worry a new life, a new individuality, a new freedom beyond all particular freedoms is gained. In this suspension, man is lifted above his small ego. In this suspension, he enters the mystic circle and approaches the mystic center. In mystic literature, we hear much of this state of utter disengagement from worldly affairs and radical engagement in the essential reality of realities. Schwenckfeld speaks about it—direct proof of such experience is lacking. We need only point to a similar phenomenon in the Eucharist, the lack of evidence of spiritual *eating*, in order to stress again the type of negative mysticism inherent in the theology of Caspar von Schwenckfeld: the mystic union with Christ and God that is taught to us, and the description of the taking place of such union that is withheld. For it is our Silesian's utmost piety, in an age of growing rationalism, that forbids him to enter—in profane writing—into the sphere of the Divine Itself.



JUST AS IN THE Eucharist, the process of salvation as it was to occur in the medieval society was now reversed. With predecessors of 16th century mysticism, Eckhart and disciples, man's freedom reached for God

who in His freedom gave man the ultimate freedom in the *unio mystica* (not destroying the human personality, according to Catholic dogma). But with Schwenckfeld, God's freedom in Christ descended upon man, and man in the state of grace—shaking off his shackles on earth—surrendered in the *new* freedom of his rebirth to God.<sup>32</sup> Always granted that for Christians, whether Catholic, Protestant, Greek-Orthodox, or sectarian, God is the almighty creator of the world and as such thrones above everything and eternally, in medieval Catholic-dependent mysticism the order of the dynamics of salvation is man-God-man; in 16th century Protestant-dependent mysticism it is God-man-God.

But one cannot help the feeling that Schwenckfeld, in both his piety and rationalism, paid respect to providence only because of the idea—overshadowing everything else—that God *must* know all things in advance and that man *must* be therefore subject to an *a priori* design. This is an *idea*, a thought that haunted the speculating soul. Psychologically, and as a matter of personal experience, the same Schwenckfeld was convinced that with the idea—or developed dogma and system—of providence, very little is actually said. In fact, all speculation about predestination was useless. Yet he continued to cling to it; it was a domineering heritage of the age and of the power of that influence which Luther exercised. He clung to it *theoretically*. His refusal to actually teach the dogma of providence, his emphasis on liberty in civil matters, and his message of the new freedom in Christ through rebirth in Christ did away with all

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determinism. Here the man himself, here his life and experience itself broke through, burdened but slightly with the remains of ideological chains. And it is another feeling that cannot be suppressed while reading in the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*: that only one step was to be made from negative mysticism to positive mysticism, one step that would have taken Schwenckfeld from his often mentioned but never in detail 'described' single "divine visitation" or "mystical experience" of 1527 to a prolonged and repeated *unio mystica*, a step that Schwenckfeld never gave evidence of having taken nor ever was guided to take.<sup>33</sup> But then—what do we know of his innermost, secret roots of life? What do we know of his life's very center, secret in any man? A life that he did not and could not entrust to the letter of which he was—a true writer's dilemma—eternally suspicious? This absolute *oratio silentii* and *sanctum silentium*, conscious or subconscious, voluntary or involuntary, would then have been in paradoxical fashion more radically mystical than the *recorded* mysticism of literate and literary mystics; for the perfect mystic remains unknown to us. The perfect mystic is lost to mankind. He is unobserved. The perfect mystic is totally withdrawn and defies chronology. The perfect mystic is dead to us. Did Schwenckfeld experience the renaissance that went beyond expression?

Humanism, Reformation, and Renaissance—the worldly one—created a new image of man that, in one way or another but at least practically, meant independence. The *homo novo* in his secular glory as cele-

brated by Humanism and the Renaissance, and the new Adam as preached by Schwenckfeld and the mystics—he stood now vis-à-vis eternity; the difference between the earth-bound individual and the heaven-bound one lies in the direction of activity that each took. Man now knew how to *will*: even the eagerness to stop willing grew opposite the Faustian lust for power. Centuries of speculation, mainly in Protestant areas, as to the meaning of voluntarism followed and confirmed the importance of the concept, negative or positive.

For Jacob Boehme, Schwenckfeld's immediate successor, God was the Will Itself. His whole philosophy is a series of variations on this theme. Jonathan Edwards' theology, derived in part from Continental Pietism, sweetened the bitter Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and at least accepted (as Schwenckfeld, father of Pietism, did) Providence as consoling and pacifying; his *Freedom of the Will* was reassuring. The idea of God determining *a priori* man's fate moved more and more into the background, not only in America; despite the growing natural sciences and their monopolistic emphasis on causality (eventually to be given up in micro-physics) the idea of human responsibility and freedom spread. A new twist was provided by Schopenhauer who viewed the world as "Will and Idea"; yet with Eastern mystical overtones, the personal will that brought nothing but hardship was to be reversed in the direction of eternal peace: toward Nirvana. Schopenhauer knew Boehme; but the 19th century 'pessimist' divorced himself from Christology and sought



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the straight path toward Nothingness in which the flame of life was extinguished once and for all and in which no rebirth—Christian or Buddhistic—was called for. To ‘resign’, in Romantic “Weltschmerz”, became fashionable. Nietzsche, son of a Protestant minister, placed voluntarism into the heart of his life-philosophy, yet gave “free death” (a secular counterpart to Christian resignation and surrender) a position of honor. The Renaissance ideal of strong and independent individuality included here the strength toward independence in death, the triumph of the emancipated man over his own organism. William James’ “will to believe” hitched the cart before the horse in a complete, psychologically dominated reversal of Reformation anthropology.<sup>34</sup> Here a person could, to speak with the notorious Baron of Münchhausen, pull himself out of a swamp by his own tress. James’ directive was a rebirth, too, but one that entirely rested upon the voluntary faculty of the earth-born.

In modern Protestant theology, such secularization of voluntaristic trends can be traced without much difficulty. Emil Brunner says, the “reality of the creature is, at its maximum, human freedom” (*The Scandal of Christianity*, p. 38).<sup>35</sup> “It is from this point that the ethical character of faith originates” (p. 39). Ethics and religion rest, in this view, on *one* human liberty which is indivisible. Any good that is done, whether in civil, moral, or religious matters, results from the *one* faculty of free choice and decision. It is an old doctrine that faith has a value only if we arrive at it through personal

choice; in recent Protestant developments, it has been restated. Christ as a human and historical person, Christianity as history, the Christian spirit as the Biblical word and the word only, the human person in relation to the outer manifestations of Christian life—in one word, to see Christian values in the everyday reality of the common man and to see *this* reality as miraculous: this is what Protestant modernism tries to teach. Without doubt, this almost positivistic approach to religion requires a true faith and great strength from the believer; Christian life is not made easy. It demands rigor. And rigorously the Word—Bible and Church—is defended against “mysticism” which the Brunner and Barth regard with fanatical suspicion. Nay, it is an attack upon “mysticism” as they see it; it must be an attack, for mystics are inherently peaceful.

In this attack, explicitly or implicitly, Schwenckfeld is included. When discussing the Eucharist, we noticed Protestants’ criticism of the Silesian. But in matters of freedom or unfreedom, the last word is never spoken. There is no ‘progress’ in the discussion on determinism versus indeterminism. The issues are just turned around and considered from different angles. The position that the mystic—an Eckhart, a Schwenckfeld, a Boehme—takes is a position that can be taken again at any given time; it is a position that requires simply—‘simply’—a making up of one’s mind. The simple making up of one’s mind, however, is an act that mankind has more often failed to rise to than not.

Freedom is a question with many different answers.

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It is a problem without solution, or many solutions. Freedom depends on *me*. It is *I* who *make* freedom. Schwenckfeld lived his freedom of conscience which he would not trade for anything else. The challenge that was thrown before him by the age, he met individually: predestination, yes; but Freedom, this I *do*.

No Buridan here.

## ❧ CHAPTER FOUR ❧

### *Yes and No: Tauler, Franck, Boehme*

AFTER ISSUES, people. With the Eucharistic spiritual eating and the new freedom in the reborn Adam, Schwenckfeld set his stakes in the flow of the history of ideas. Treating the two marks, we see him build toward the sky, and we see his spiritual rejuvenation in relation to the growth of others. As to his own particular stand in the great stream Mysticism—in the manner so far characterized in previous chapters—renewed comparison and contrast may draw its outlines more neatly. But comparison to, and contrast with, whom? After issues, who?

The oldest spring of German mystical literature from which Schwenckfeld drank was Tauler. Its water, diluted or of different composition, made its way to Sebastian Franck, Schwenckfeld's contemporary and acquaintance. And it grew to a baroque lake, with many quaint scenes, in Jacob Boehme. They all stand in the water of mysticism, but some nearer the soil of hard

rationalism and others closer to the midstream of unseen currents.

The position of Tauler, predecessor, and Franck, comrade-in-arms, and Boehme, successor, affords us meaningful perspective. Schwenckfeld points to both Tauler and Franck (once significantly contrasting *them*, V, 427), and Boehme points to Schwenckfeld. The latter agrees, as he sees it, with Tauler in many respects; disagrees mostly with Franck (as a friend disagrees with another friend, not as a man with his foe); and Boehme both agrees and disagrees with his Silesian compatriot of a century before.

These three spiritual relatives are close enough to one another to have stood in the same light, yet in their closeness each has been far enough from the other to have thrown his shadow on the other's face.

They have all to say Yes and No to one another.

## ❧ 2 ❧

IT IS LIKELY that Schwenckfeld saw the grave of Tauler in Strassburg with the stone depicting the Dominican's tall, slender figure and his noble face.<sup>36</sup> When in exile on the Rhine, he had already read the mystic.

Tauler, born around 1300 in Strassburg, a disciple of Meister Eckhart, was the middle link in the triumvirate of old German mysticism, with his contemporary Seuse as the third and perhaps most articulate person. He be-



came the center of the pious circle of the "Friends of God" ("Gottesfreunde") in the Southwest. Many of his German sermons are extant; much, however, that he was supposed to have written was authored by others. He died in 1361, exactly two hundred years before Schwenckfeld.

In 1498, a first Tauler print appeared in Leipzig. Schwenckfeld quoted from the second of 1508 (of Augsburg) and the third of 1521 (of Basle). But the question arises: Just which Tauler did he cite, and which Tauler did he ignore (or of which Tauler was he ignorant)? As a matter of introduction, we have already and very briefly drawn some parallel and some divergent lines between the two; but that was too general, in generalities previous historians have dealt enough. Tauler and Schwenckfeld need concrete confrontation.

Very early, Schwenckfeld mentions the Dominican preacher as the "Christian teacher"—a vague description—who tells us that "God does not accept any work which does not have Him as beginning, middle, and end" (I, 252). This is a common warning issued indiscriminately by members of the Church in the direction of world-bound mortals; it did not take a Tauler or a Schwenckfeld, for that matter, to express it. In a much more original vein is another warning, by the Silesian, that where there is an "image" ("bild") between God and man, there is no "unification" ("verainigung"); and he adds, "Taulerus says, If God would effect His grace through a creature, then man is never saved" (III, 86). God, we hear, is creatureless; the creature is, *per se*, lost.

## YES AND NO

No creature can save us (Jesus is the non-creaturely savior). Salvation comes when God should "move you in your depth ["Grund"] with His uncreated essence ["mit seinem ainfaeltigen wesen"] without means of any image, ceremony, creature, or sacrament, in the greatest composure, stillness of your soul, resignation of your self and peace of your heart. Then He speaks His word and Himself into the soul, and not into any image."

If this sounds almost or indeed mystical, we must be careful to distinguish, again, between radical mysticism and its spiritualistic variety. We have pointed out above, in our discussion of the term *Gelassenheit*, that intention and vocabulary of the 'left-wing' Christians has changed considerably over the centuries and that "resignation" in particular absorbed a more and more psychological color in the age of the Reformation; in the time of Luther, the 14th century writers were already 'outdated'. On the polemical side, Schwenckfeld argues against Christian-Catholic imagery and pomp, against the doctrine of the creaturely Christ, and against the all-too literal acceptance of the Lord's Supper. Constructively, he argues for an inward life (soul, peace of heart) and prepares the ground for his Christology. There are other such references to Tauler: that man must be saved directly (VII, 445), that there is an inward and outward individual (VIII, 404), that we are generally in God (X, 337).

There is no doubt as to the over-all *correctness* of the Tauler quotations in the works of Schwenckfeld; but

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if we see those quotations in context in the original sermon, we notice additions and omissions. There is a different tone in Tauler, the *whole* Tauler, which contrasts with that of Schwenckfeld's spiritualistic piety. When the Silesian once cites a well-known example from the Swabian, our curiosity is aroused. How complete is the citation? The editors of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* have given us invaluable help in tracing the text back to the source; this is where an editor's task ends. In a critical study, we must go one step further and consider the entire context; this is where a critic's task begins. It is an undertaking that, although pressing, has never been performed; instead, we have had much loose talk about 'mysticism' versus 'no mysticism'.

As a matter of convenience, we shall print Schwenckfeld's Tauler quotations and Tauler's original text opposite each other, and the difference between copy and source will become obvious at one glance, if we read the source to the end and note the omission on the other side.

### *Schwenckfeld's Tauler*

#### *quotation*

"Then, when the faithful shepherd finds the sheep, he lays it upon his shoulders and carries it home into his sheep-fold. His shoulders, as an old teacher [Tauler] says, are the deified human-

#### *Tauler's original text*

"...thus you become like Him [the Lord], and you will become the lovely sheep that He will carry on His shoulder of His deified humanity whom you have followed, until [you are] in

ity of Christ, by which the sheep is carried, is incorporated in it, and is carried, transmitted, and guided through it into the supra-essential eternal Godhead, that is, finally into the glory of God (in which Christ, the man, rules), where there is all the perfect pasture, bliss, and eternal joy.

There is, indeed, no other way into the realm of God than the humanity, the body, flesh, and blood of Christ. This is the new and living way . . ." (X, 437)

the supra-essential Godhead, where there is perfect pasture. Children [Dominican nuns], this above all other things must by necessity be.

Now you should know, when you have become such a sheep and have followed the worthy ideal, our Lord Jesus Christ, all of which is necessary, only then are you a good and holy person. But if you should become a noble person, then you must know that the things over which you yet have to climb, are unmeasurably far." <sup>37</sup>

Schwenckfeld's first paragraph is a paraphrase of Tauler's text, still 'correct' but with a small yet significant addition: speaking of the "Godhead," he adds the person of Christ. The second paragraph is altogether addition, it is purely Schwenckfeld himself who speaks. The theme: Christ and Christology.

Comparing the left with the right column, we notice that Tauler does say that the *imitatio Christi* is necessary (Tauler was warned by the prosecution of Eckhart and subsequently became very careful in following the official line); but then he continues with the statement, which in all its moderation of expression cannot be mis-

understood, that to really become a "noble" person in the *unio mystica*, we must transcend the *imitatio Christi*. Toward the union with the Godhead, we have to travel "unmeasurably" far. A "noble" person was one that was like God. The word "noble" came from the world of medieval knights and aristocracy with its ideal of honor, honorable adventure, self-discipline, love ("minne"), fortitude, purity, and a superior spirit (the expression "hôher muot" is well nigh untranslatable). This ideal was transmitted upon religious life, its term became a favorite of Eckhart, Tauler, and Seuse. With it, the ultimate was said. And although the ultimate is unthinkable, the word "edel" was so well known and so suggestive that the Unthinkable was visualized, somehow, by the thinking person. "Edel," then, is a typical example of how man approaches, by means of his language, what actually is *beyond* language.<sup>38</sup>

Schwenckfeld, himself born into the nobility, did no longer use this middle-high German metaphor in the sense that Tauler did. Schwenckfeld stopped where Tauler began; and after stopping, the Silesian knight made a turn that led away from tradition. Thus, he preserved his originality. We cannot speak of any 'influence' of Tauler upon Schwenckfeld in the sense that the former 'shaped' the latter's thoughts; rather, the latter found some confirmation in parts of the former and disregarded those parts which did not fit into his own Christology.

One page after the above quotation, we find another from the same sermon of the 14th century Dominican.



*Schwenckfeld's Tauler*

*quotation*

"Taulerus, an old teacher, speaks, The woman who searches is the Godhead, the lantern is the deified humanity, the penny is the soul, which penny must have three things: its right weight; its good material, gold or silver; and its proper impression or coinage; should it be correct, good, and valid.

Thus, a Christian soul must also have such three things, if it should pass God's trial and inherit His realm: its matter is a new spiritual, holy flesh with which it is united, its weight are the virtues, the gifts of the Holy Ghost without which all souls (if Satan places himself upon the other side of the scale) will be found to be much too light for God." (X, 438)

*Tauler's original text*

This woman, that is the Godhead. The lantern, that is the deified humanity. The penny, that is the soul. This penny must have three things, and if it lacks one, then it is not a right penny. It must have its weight and its matter, its coinage and its impression: all this it must have by necessity. It must be of gold or silver: that must be its matter.

O children, how wonderful this penny is! It is indeed a golden penny, and there is something beyond measure and understanding about this worthy penny.

This penny must have its weight. You must know: the weight of this penny is unweighable; it weighs more than heaven and earth and more than anything in it. For God is in this penny, and therefore it weighs as much as God." <sup>39</sup>

Schwenckfeld sees the "penny's" (the soul's) matter as the spiritualism of the reborn man in Christ; this rebirth is an event which takes place on earth. The soul's weight are the virtues which we practice during our life (or fail to practice). The event which takes place after our death is the final judgment of God; for that eschatological moment we are to prepare ourselves in the span from birth to death. This span is Schwenckfeld's concern. For Tauler, however, God Himself is in the penny; even during our lifetime, a union with the Godhead is a possibility for the righteous creature.

While the Silesian considers the soul as spiritually reborn the Alsatian believes that the soul *as it is* may be in the Godhead. For the former, there remains a dualism of God versus man; for the latter, a mystical monism is to be taught. Tauler postulated the free will of man in a world that is not altogether evil; Schwenckfeld knew of a free will only after sinful man in an evil world had been lifted to the rebirth in Christ.

But Schwenckfeld did not realize this difference between the original Tauler and the Tauler as he saw him (and as he quoted him). In a letter of 1547, the apostle of the "Middle Way" makes use of one of the more careful Taulerian phrases in which it is even denied that there is any transformation of man into divine nature (XI, 348). In another letter, however, there is reference to a more extreme expression (XI, 746). It is relatively easy for us to see, who are in the position to view the history of ideas with the help of critical editions, why Schwenckfeld never had a clear picture of medieval

German mysticism: this mysticism itself wavered between different ideals which were either entirely personal or, however, subject to pressure from officials. Subsequently, as we already pointed out (Introduction and Notes), Schwenckfeld also oscillated in mystical matters and is himself difficult to confine and define. Nevertheless it is safe to say that, as a whole, he was inclined toward moderation and put his heart into *his* truth of Christological piety and a truly Christian life. In this latter respect, no literary mystic could claim to be his superior.

Until the end of his days, Schwenckfeld loved *his* Tauler. He relied on him especially in questions of reaching God without creaturely means, that is, reaching God through Christ (XII, 500; XV, 165; XVI, 155, 201, 709, etc.). Ten years before his death, it seems nevertheless that he finally reached a point of dissociation from the Strassburgian based on his general dislike of Catholicism. Tauler, he says, "was a great teacher" but was under the "yoke" of the Roman Church (XII, 554). The break between the two had been inevitable; yet its cause was actually extraneous to the issues involved. Eckhart had been declared partly heretical by the Catholic Church, and Tauler only escaped a similar condemnation because of his more diplomatic phraseology. To accuse Tauler of ideological bondage, was certainly wrong. The accusation, however, that was to be expected from a man like Schwenckfeld took on a surprisingly vague tone. He noted only that Tauler was "obscure and confused in some places so that not every-

one can be guided" (ibid.). Christ was the true guiding light. What Schwenckfeld called "obscure and confused" in Tauler has been called, by others, pantheism and heresy. Perhaps Schwenckfeld did not want to see his old favorite drawn into the fields of pantheistic controversy; perhaps he left his own criticism as vague as it was out of reverence. If this is so, Schwenckfeld proved once more his inalienable Christian spirit that took up the defense when attacked (as by Luther), but that shunned unprovoked and unnecessary polemics.

Tauler's sermons were repeatedly printed in the course of the 16th and 17th centuries; Schwenckfeld made his influence felt during the same period through his followers. Sometimes, the ideas of the two men merged, sometimes they stayed apart. Some considered them related spirits; others were keen to separate them. Today, we consider each a thinker in his own right: while they touch each other, they retain their individuality. Mystics both, in the general sense, the one sees the world as part of the Godhead, while the other sees the reborn human spirit as ready to be received by Christ.

### ❧ 3 ❧

THE TAULER of Schwenckfeld had, then, to be a very different writer from Sebastian Franck.<sup>40</sup> Tauler, we hear (V, 427), believes in the God who is beyond time and space and who was, as being beyond all that is, the

transcendental creator of the world. This dualism of Creator and Creation is something, Schwenckfeld asserts, that "Franck perhaps did not understand." But as we have seen, it was Schwenckfeld who did not accept the radically mystical Tauler. Schwenckfeld uses here, mistakenly, the authority of Tauler in order to refute Franck. The question is: Who came closer to the real Tauler's views, Schwenckfeld or Franck? In what respect do the two contemporaries differ from each other and from their forerunner? And where does Franck actually stand?

Sebastian Franck (1499-1542), a Swabian, theologically educated in the Dominican college in Heidelberg (Eckhart, Tauler, Seuse were Dominicans!), priest, then reformed and reformer, author of chronicles, of the famous *Paradoxa*, of translations, prosecuted till his death, advocate of the "invisible church"—one of the first 'free-lance' writers of German literature, together with Schwenckfeld the most important dissenter of Luther's Reformation. Schwenckfeld and Franck met in Strassburg and again in Ulm; both were harassed by the orthodox clergy and both banned from the latter city. Franck died in Basle.

To be sure, Schwenckfeld did *not* misunderstand Franck. When the Silesian compared Tauler with the author of the *Paradoxa*, the direction of possible misunderstanding pointed toward the 14th century mystic who was removed in time and philosophy; as to the 16th century contemporary, Schwenckfeld knew very well what he was talking about. He was well aware of the



import of Franck's writings. He had read much of them, even in manuscript (IX, 791); the two must have been good friends.

Rufus Jones has clearly outlined Franck's basic position, and we may take one of his paragraphs as a starting point for further comparison and contrast. "For Franck, the soul has never lost the divine Image . . . We are all, in the deepest centre of our being, like Adam, possessed of a substantial essence, not of earth, not of time and space, not of the shadow but of the eternal, spiritual, and heavenly type. It may become overlaid with the rubbish of earth, . . . and be forgotten, but we have only to return home within ourselves to find the God who has never sundered from us and who could not leave us without leaving Himself" (*Spiritual Reformers*, p. 54).

For Schwenckfeld, Adam, the old Adam, is depraved and lost; for Franck, the old Adam may be saved. Schwenckfeld's Adam is fundamentally evil; Franck's only superficially so. The evil Adam has basically to be reborn; the good Adam must only make a turn.

In a letter of 1535, Schwenckfeld distinguishes intelligibly between his and Franck's views (V, 422 f). The Swabian holds, it is pointed out, that the "seed of God" was in the chosen people from the moment of their birth (V, 422 f). Since the issue in Schwenckfeld's discussion is not predestination, the emphasis in the Franck-reference is upon the union of God and man rather than upon pre-election. For our Silesian, however, both ideas in such a form are anathema; for after Adam's fall, man

is not born with such a gift as a godly seed in him (and, of course, he is not pre-elected). The fallen Adam must be reborn spiritually.

Two years later, in a letter of 1538, Schwenckfeld attacks the "new philosophical error" that God, "indeed God's essence, spirit, word of Christ be in all creatures, which is a blasphemy of Christ and of God"; on the margin, reference is made to Franck's *Golden Arch* and the *Paradoxa* (VI, 44 f). The last book had been published in 1534, the first not too long before the letter was written, in any case before March 15, 1538. The "attack" was not unprovoked. Just then, Franck himself was bitterly attacked by the orthodox clergy of Ulm; the city council decreed that he, with wife and children, should leave the town. The clergy, in particular Martin Frecht, managed to draw Schwenckfeld into the affair. There was much opposition against both Franck's and Schwenckfeld's publications between 1538 and 1539. "Frecht very cleverly continued to associate Schwenckfeld with Franck," say the editors of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* (VI, 386), "in the obvious hope of disposing of the former in the same way as the latter was to be removed from the city" (cf. also pp. 119, 271, 541). Schwenckfeld, however, stated his own position in contrast to that of Franck neither out of fear of reprisal nor for the practical reason that dissociation from Franck might spare him expulsion, but because he felt that his own teaching had to remain clear from any trace of alien pantheism. He owed it to his conscience that his words must be pure from dilution.

## SCHWENCKFELD, KNIGHT OF FAITH

He knew that whatever he said, as long as it was unorthodox, he was subject to persecution. And unorthodox he was.

In contrast to Franck, Schwenckfeld said that God reserves His divine essence for Himself; only in Christ's godly being does He communicate something of His nature to man (VI, 45). Franck is classified as a "philosopher" who holds that God Himself is the essence of all things (VIII, 469); God in nature—no, to such obvious error only rationalistic scholastics could be led. The whole issue between the two exiles can be reduced to the simple formula that Franck saw God's word and spirit in the "law of nature" (VII, 152); nature itself, reality itself is already deified; there is no break between creator and creation; the world is essentially good because it is essentially divine; man is originally free and never quite lost; there is, at least potentially, universal harmony, even after the expulsion of man from the Garden of Eden. Schwenckfeld, although acknowledging the trend toward "inward religion" in Franck and others, nevertheless sees a gulf between himself and the rest: because there is a gulf between God and man, and only Christ is the bridge.

It is both depressing and encouraging to see how kindred spirits were pitted against each other in that turbulent epoch called The Reformation: depressing, because the margin of difference was actually small; encouraging, because each was able to preserve his individuality. It is saddening to observe that people who sought the same—the Ultimate—should have spilled their resources

in ineffectual controversy; yet that the glory of man never comes out more brilliantly than in contests of strength. Man, outwardly equal, is inwardly subtly dissimilar; outwardly following only *his* light, he is inwardly kindled by the same fire. What is man? Whence and whither goes he? Why all the struggle? Questions and so many answers. So many answers and questions all over again. Luther and Zwingli, Zwingli and Calvin . . . Luther and Schwenckfeld, and Schwenckfeld and Franck, and Franck and Paracelsus, personalities, issues, controversies, the stream of the history of ideas. And what difference did it all make? What good did it do *us*? What have *we* learned from it, we, who are still the old Adams, going about our business like our forefathers for thousands of years?

Results never count. Each question has its value in itself. It is the probing mind that is important. Thinking gets its satisfaction in thinking only; the inventor cares little about the thing invented. It is invention that matters, the *act* of inventing something—whatever its consequences. If man is evil, he will use the invention to evil purpose; if he is good, he will use it constructively. If he is free to choose between good and evil, he must choose the course that the invention should occupy.

We must learn to see the history of ideas in this perspective. As for the controversy between Schwenckfeld and Franck, it is not a squabble; it is the duel of sharp minds, further sharpening the edge of concept and idea, of the sword of faith, and of the trenchant knife of knowledge. Is wisdom its fruit? Schwenckfeld's life and

death, Franck's suffering and final peace may be called to witness.

So we appreciate their confrontation. In the last analysis, their positions are thus: While Schwenckfeld sees a dualism of divine transcendence and human immanence, Franck sees such dualism of Word and Flesh *in* man himself. While agreeing in their objection to Lutheran orthodoxy, its over-emphasis on the outward word, sermon, sacrament, and institution, Schwenckfeld's "inward word" is spoken by Christ and heard by the reborn Christian and not by the natural person of Franck. The Silesian follows the pious *Imitatio Christi*, the Swabian the speculative *Theologia Germanica*.

How radical Franck can be, is shown by his famous phrase that God is the "substance of visible and invisible things, of all creature's essence, of the Is of all Is."<sup>41</sup> Even pantheism, although not altogether 'correct', is not altogether 'false' as far as the author of the *Paradoxa* is concerned. Schwenckfeld had been called possessed by the devil, was considered foolish and mad and worthy of the stake; but this man Franck was even worse, for there is no greater sin within the realm of Christendom than to profess that Nature, too, is part of grace. The "Wesen" (essence) is now in the "Wesen" (creatures)—impossible! But the history of ideas is irreversible, the history of ideas expresses itself in the history of language, in the change of words and their meaning: what once was the term to denote the divine essence, became the term to denote the creature.

With Renaissance and Humanism, a new enthusiasm



for nature and natural man had arisen; in Franck, the new nature-philosophy became amalgamated in his doctrine of the invisible church. Two hundred years earlier, Tauler had granted natural-Christian man a natural sort of freedom, outside nature, to achieve unity with the Super-Natural. Franck's natural man found God freely in nature itself. Tauler had to lift man to the Godhead; Franck's natural man and the Godhead needed only to meet on earth. Both Tauler and Franck thought natural man essentially capable of salvation; Schwenckfeld did not. For him, natural man was evil. The old Adam was rotten to the core. Rebirth was the salvation, and rebirth was no gradual change from evil toward good: it was the 'leap', the transcending of the first birth in the second, the miracle that destroyed one man for the other who was new in spirit. In the new spirit, freedom stood.

Tauler knew of a direct outgoing of resigned man into God; Franck needed little such outgoing except for a change of mind; Schwenckfeld needed an extra step—rebirth—before any positive result would occur. Tauler asked for the initial *via purgativa*, and if this was achieved, all was well. Franck followed suit. But Schwenckfeld's condition was—the divine touch. Whereas for other mystics, the *via unitiva* was the last stage in the process of purgation and illumination, for Schwenckfeld there was no first and no last; a Christian life was either a Christian life, or it was no Christian life at all. His *via regia*, his Royal Road, his Middle Way was Christ—a Way that started with Christ and ended with Christ, not a way toward Christ. This Middle Way

was Christian all the way through, an absolute state, not a process. It was a difficult state to achieve, impossible without grace. Schwenckfeld asked for everything. His Middle Way was perfection. Man was therefore left imperfect, or he became perfect. Perfect was only Christ, man yet not creature; He was the perfect man because He did not share the creature's native imperfections. To become Christ-like was the goal—but who reached it?

The questions that we asked have now been answered, at least within the framework of this study. This is Schwenckfeld's Yes: he feels himself close to Tauler and Franck, otherwise he would not have cared to discuss them at all; and this is his No: he was alone in his Christological spiritualism. Tauler and Franck are closer to each other than to Schwenckfeld; and Schwenckfeld remains the lonely apostle of a Christian life that demanded everything or nothing. Yes or No—no middle path here.

## ❧ 4 ❧

**A**MONG THE REGIONS of Germany that have cultivated mystical trends, two stand out: the Southwest and the East. There the Allemanni settled, here the Silesians. The man who, in his person, linked the two regions was Schwenckfeld. While still at home, he became acquainted with the writings of the Alsatian Tauler. Before he was exiled, his ideas had left their imprint on

open minds. In exile, Tauler, Franck, Paracelsus—men from the Alsace, Swabia, and Switzerland, respectively—left their imprint on him. His letters, pamphlets, and books poured back into Silesia, strengthening and enlarging his group of followers. Across Germany, he had instituted an exchange of ideas that can perhaps be measured by the rich growth which mysticism experienced mainly in Silesia in the century after the nobleman's death.

Jacob Boehme was born in 1575, near Görlitz, about a three day march from the birthplace of Schwenckfeld.<sup>42</sup> He was educated in Christian spirit by his parents, relatively well-to-do peasants; his father held honorary offices in his village. Jacob became a shoemaker, a master of his trade, married, and settled in Görlitz. He was given to introspection, and while he was a good and successful craftsman, he lived a life detached from worldly affairs. The Bible was his major source of learning and inspiration; of the church-wars of his time, he speaks with disgust. In 1600, he has his illumination: the pansophist breaks through with elementary force. From this time on, he is the searcher and thinker. As such he became famous. His books went out into the world: Silesia, Germany, Holland, England, America . . . At home, he was prosecuted by the narrow and provincial Lutheran orthodoxy. But he continued reading, deliberating, writing. Through Franck and Valentin Weigel, he felt Eckhardian mysticism. Nature mysticism came to him through the writings of Paracelsus. The new mysticism that dates with Jacob Boehme fed on older

movements yet was original and genuine by force of the genius that hid away in the cobbler's hut. No Popishly Protestant orthodoxy could annihilate that genius, as much as it wanted and as much as it tried to.

During his years of travel as a journeyman, Boehme had come to a district where followers of Caspar von Schwenckfeld lived. Schwenckfelders were said to have lived in and around Görlitz. Many of the landed aristocracy tended toward Schwenckfeldianism. One of them, a Karl von Endern, borrowed the cobbler's book for his perusal. More and more, the Silesian nobility entered into contact with Boehme.

But with Weigel's, Franck's, and Paracelsus's books, Boehme had already had indirect contact with Schwenckfeld who, to be sure, influenced at least Weigel.<sup>43</sup> The air around Görlitz was full with the spiritualism which was nourished by an indigenous desire for a living religion; no dry word-splitting of Lutheran ministers could satisfy the souls. It was not only the aristocracy that yielded to pietism; the impoverished peasantry, neglected in Schwenckfeld's times as much as in Boehme's, looked eagerly for a faith that could be followed at home, on the fields, in misery and misfortune; that needed no pompous cathedral, and that promised at least a feeding of the souls if the bodies went hungry.

Anabaptism, pietism, mysticism, spiritualism; vision, ecstasy, asceticism—these were the phenomena that rose on Silesian soil. They gave birth, in the 17th century, to three or four generations of writers—philos-

ophers, poets, dramatists, novelists, mystics—who dominated German literature for a century. Outside Silesia, a Leibniz, a Bach were the greatest fruits of that era. The Silesians, Gerhart Hauptmann and Hermann Stehr, two hundred years later, were perhaps the last fruits. The soil is now no longer German.

Boehme, in his youth filled with only a little knowledge, was the dry sponge that absorbed many of the mystical waters which flowed through German lands; and the dried-out country around him eagerly drank of the waters that the sponge again yielded. The rather uneducated yet naturally wise cobbler took but those fluids which corresponded to his own and left the others that could have been poison. He, too, said his Yes and No to what was offered. He was under Eckhardian influence with its priority of the intellect—intellect of human speculation and intellect of God's omniscience—but in his own metaphysics it was the Will that was the first force; in ethics, he did not preach resignation because he had learned to appreciate "the lilies in the field." The shoe-master, in a sometimes confused and confusing, naive and ignorant but always penetrating manner, put his indelible seal on everything he wrote. Three hundred years after Eckhart, three hundred years before our own time, in the middle of a great epoch (despite its crippling through the Thirty Years' War), there was the humble man from Görlitz who became the most original genius of German mysticism. If Schwenckfeld 'influenced' Jacob Boehme, Schwenckfeld rises considerably in our estimate.



Boehme read Schwenckfeld, of that there is no doubt. In a letter to Caspar Lindner, of 1621 or 1622, he devotes five paragraphs to a refutation of Schwenckfeld's doctrine of Christ's non-creaturely humanity.<sup>44</sup>

“As far as Schwenckfeld is concerned, this point is offensive that he believes Christ not to be a creature; he has not yet understood the principles according to which it is impossible to tell why Christ should be no creature. As for His deity, He is no creature; as for His heavenly essence, however, . . . He is creaturely with it in humanity and outside of humanity He is non-creaturely.”

And Boehme continues to state his own point of view quite lengthily, taking up Weigel both critically and affirmatively. The defense erected here against a non-creaturely Christ is, however, not as strong as it might have been if Boehme would have expressed himself more clearly, especially prior to the above mentioned discussion. If we investigate his writings, we see that his position is ambiguous.

In most places, Boehme uses “creature” to denote the ordinary man. Only sometimes does he refer to Christ as “creature.” But then he is vague. Once he says Christ is creaturely yet not “measurable” (*Die drei Principien göttlichen Wesens*, p. 317); He is such a creature “who can be everywhere as the Godhead Himself” (p. 318). Such a creature, we would argue, is no longer a true creature. The concept of “creature” is watered down

and loses its original meaning; it is useless and meaningless to apply such a concept. Tired of scholastic distinctions, Boehme calls out, in the same book, to stop arguing about the nature of Christ (p. 356) and to love in the name of Christ.

Similarly, we hear that Christ is born but not "made" (*Aurora*, p. 37). Here, Boehme treads on Schwenckfeld's grounds. The latter says, too, that the Savior is born yet "uncreated" (VI, 315) or not "made" (VII, 289). The difference between the two Silesians is one of words: Boehme uses the term "gemacht," Schwenckfeld "geschaffen."

Christology leads over to the problem of the Eucharist. Here, too, Boehme follows his Silesian countryman. "The soul is spirit," he says in the *Three Principles*, "the soul eats spiritual food, and the new man eats of the pure element, and the outward man eats of the products of the four elements" (p. 315). Spiritual eating, rebirth, and inward man are ideas which we—and Boehme—know from Schwenckfeld. Contrary to Luther and according to the apostle of the Middle Way, evil man cannot partake in the Lord's Supper; cleansing and rebirth have to come first (*Vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen*, p. 214).<sup>45</sup> Boehme rejects explicitly the Catholic dogma of transubstantiation, Luther's consubstantiation, and Zwingli's symbolism (*Von Christi Testament des blg. Abendmahls*, p. 571), and he gets quite bitter over the intolerance of the established churches. In another treatise on *Threefold Man*, added to the *Three Princi-*

ples as an appendix, both the Eucharist and baptism are considered effective only if received by inward man.

A man like Boehme could not be satisfied with church service, material consumption of Bread and Wine, and elemental baptism. All that he said, his life long, pointed to the true, essential, inward religion as opposed to the superficial 'Christendom' of his day. Schwenckfeld showed him the way. The latter's books, pamphlets and epistles abounded in Germany. *Von dreierley Leben der Menschen*, for example, whose title already is foreshadowing Boehme writings, existed in three editions; the first was of 1547, a reprint appeared in 1564, and Daniel Sudermann published the third in 1592. Especially in Silesia, of course, Schwenckfeld's works circulated among the searchers for spiritual food. "What does the devil do?" Boehme asks in his book *Vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen*. The devil leads man into church, and there, when man's rebirth in Christ is taught, he sows worldly thoughts into man (p. 127). This is the devil's plan: as long as he can persuade man to go to church, man believes he is doing just the right thing. But the "church with walls," as Boehme says sarcastically, cannot replace the church within. Man must be reborn within, then he can resist Satan (p. 128). A treatise which Boehme wrote close to his death, *Der Weg zu Christo*, is Schwenckfeldian throughout. Time and again, rebirth in Christ, inward religion, spiritualism is stressed. Angrily he defies "title-and-tongue-Christianity," a Christianity by name and speech only ("Titel-und Maulchristenheit," p. 114).

In his criticism of established churches, Boehme is more aggressive than Schwenckfeld. Early in his writings he kept awake the memory of Catholic mismanagement, attacking the whole hierarchy of Rome (*Aurora*, p. 84). To him, the Lutheran clergy was nothing but pseudo-Christian; the real faith has never been weaker since Christ's days than in his, Boehme's, time, he says, when the "real faith is supposed to have been found" (*Der Weg zu Christo*, p. 97). The "historical" faith in the historical Christ is void of meaning. "Look", the humble Silesian warns, "you call yourself a Christian and you are proud of being a child of God; you tell us this with your mouth, but your heart is a murderer and a thief" (*Three Principles*, p. 245).

The times were bad. Reformation and Counter-Reformation wrestled with each other. Germany was split up into numerous factions. Separatism reigned among the princes. The economic situation was alarming. The Emperor, never weaker, was far removed from the troubles of the people. The big powers—France, Sweden—waited for an opportunity to invade the *Reich*. The air was full of prophecies of doom, the Last Days were expected, fear was in the hearts of man. Lust, greed, debauchery grew mushroom-like. Here the forlorn individual—there the desire to reap as much as one could of poor harvests as long as a deceiving peace lasted. Some sought the light within—they were the ones who followed Boehme or Schwenckfeld or the other mystics that soon were to live in Silesian lands.

Boehme and Schwenckfeld stand, so to say, back to

back, having in common Christology and the spiritual interpretation of the Eucharist; they have in common a repudiation of degenerated outward Christianity. Thus standing together and trying to hold the ground against armies of attackers, they look out, however, in different directions. The skies that each of them sees are embraced in a different *Weltanschauung*: and, indeed, a different total view of the world separated them from each other. Schwenckfeld's view is fixed upon God and Predestination as he learned it from his Bible studies. Boehme transforms Biblical religion into a nature-philosophy, a metaphysics of genuinely German character; the *philosophus teutonicus*, as he was later called, molded ancient metaphors into a modern set of concepts. Schwenckfeld remained the existence-bound religious seeker and apostle; Boehme became a full-fledged systematical thinker.

Also, Boehme—like Franck—tended toward a radical form of mysticism which was alien to Schwenckfeld. "The right heaven", we read in the *Three Principles*, "where God lives, is everywhere in all places, even in the middle of the earth: it includes hell, where the devils dwell, and nothing is outside of God" (p. 56). The people must have received consolation when they further read that the soul "does not need to travel far when it separates from the body: on the same spot where the body dies, there is heaven and hell, there is God and the devil; but each in his own realm" (p. 249).

These were new words, Baroque mysticism made its entrance. When Boehme died in 1624, the Thirty Years'



War had been on for six years. This fighting eventually destroyed the Schwenckfeld-circles in Swabia, and in the fighting's wake, when the armistice between Catholics and Protestants was declared, the Schwenckfelders in Silesia were driven out in the early 18th century through concerted action of both 'Christian' parties. But before the followers of the Silesian nobleman left, Boehme's writings showed effect on them. Letters went back and forth among them discussing the shoemaker-mystic's ideas. Today we can read those discussions in manuscripts which were brought over to America by the Schwenckfelders; the *Schwenckfelder Library* counts them among its treasures. One Martin John Jr. wrote, in 1696, to a friend, "Your remarks about chiliasm [belief in Christ's return to earth to reign during the millennium] please me not badly, neither Jacob Böhm's . . . However, I am content that my soul after separation from the body will come to God and Christ. . ." <sup>46</sup> There are other extant letters in which Boehme's ideas are carefully weighed.

Together with letters, books were shipped to the States. Of Boehme's writings, we find in the *Schwenckfelder Library* the following: *Von der Genaden-Wahl*, bound together with *Von Christi Testamenten* (Amsterdam, 1682); *Morgenroete im Aufgang*, together with *De Signatura Rerum* (Amsterdam, 1682); a compilation from Boehme's works *Einleitung zum Wahren und gruendlichen Erkaenntnis* (Amsterdam, 1718); significantly, we have here the treatise which is so markedly Schwenckfeldian, *Der Weg zu Christo* (Nach dem

Amsterdamer Exemplar, 1732), together with *Der unbekandte Christus* by Christian Hohburg (Frankfurt & Leipzig, 1720), an author of Schwenckfeldian leanings who lived in the middle of the 17th century; and there are, furthermore, *Quaestiones Theosophicae oder Betrachtung Goettlicher Offenbarung* (no place, 1730) as well as *Ein Systematischer Auszug aus des Gottseligen und Hoherleuchteten Deutschen Theosophi Jacob Boehmens Saemmtlichen Schriften* which was printed in the new world, in Ephrata, Pennsylvania, in 1822.

Far from being mere collectors of books which may have had, or may not have had, spiritual kinship to Caspar von Schwenckfeld, some of the latter's followers were eager readers of Boehme's writings as proved by the marginal notes. On page 114, for example, of *Von der Genaden-Wahl* Boehme speaks of the new birth of man who, by free will, must turn toward Christ and who must become spiritually part of Christ (chapter 8). On the margin, there is written in ink, "Nur allein der rechte neue mensch" ("Only the right new man"). The Schwenckfelder who made this remark chose to ignore the fact that Boehme supported here indeterminism and chose to dwell only on the doctrine of spiritual rebirth. When the shoemaker-mystic brands the Christians-by-name-and-tongue (p. 188, chapter 12), there is added by the reader, "Sind alle mit einander falsche propheten" ("They all are false prophets"). In regard to baptism, it is held, both in print and in ink, that it is dangerous to baptize children if their parents have no faith (*Von Christi Testamenten*, p. 42). This warning is in line with

our mystic's spiritualism which means that only adult, mature, and truly convinced Christians may partake in the sacraments.

The Schwenckfelders who migrated to the United States had their internal troubles, and the reading of Jacob Boehme may have contributed to them. A controversy over a code of conduct in daily life "quite naturally led to the appropriateness of reading books authored by non-Schwenckfelder mystics. The conservative faction insisted that it was dangerous to read widely among other mystics" while others disagreed (Andrew S. Berky, *Practitioner in Physick*, p. 55).<sup>47</sup> It seems that the more liberal faction won out in the end; the *Schwenckfelder Library* itself is evidence of that. This institution has now become a center of research in matters related to mysticism; here Boehme is at home, here are old Tauler editions, here works on Sebastian Franck can be found, in addition to the works of Schwenckfeld.

## ❧ 5 ❧

FOUR MYSTICS, four individualities. Tauler, Franck, Schwenckfeld, Boehme—they belong to the great stream of mysticism yet stand in different branches which flow through the land occupied by the "churches with walls". They are the 'silent ones in the land' while much noise emanates from church-towers and pulpits, from theological schools and scholastic symposiums.

They speak, yes, but they speak to the heart. They do not believe in so-called tangible evidence of religion, no, but they prove with their own lives how to live religiously.

Four powerful thinkers, preachers, and writers, but to varying degrees. Tauler stood in the shadow of Eckhart, Schwenckfeld and Franck in the shadow of Luther, only Boehme was all light. Mystics all, yet with different total philosophies. Tauler and Schwenckfeld believed in ignoring, or transcending, nature; Franck and Boehme incorporated nature into their systems as part of the Godhead. For Tauler, Franck, and Boehme, man was potentially good and free; for Schwenckfeld, man was evil, and his freedom was a matter of complex speculation.

The evil that they themselves experienced had, for Tauler and Franck, its origin in choice; for Boehme, evil was a condition that was to be explored in metaphysics because the Godhead or the Will, although actually not evil in Himself, had created a dual world, a world of strife long before man appeared on earth and ate from the Tree of Knowledge; for Schwenckfeld, it was this eating that plunged Adam into the abyss. Whatever the origin, the four mystics experienced the phenomenon in a peculiar form: it was the evil that Christians committed toward other Christians who were different. 'Christians' toward other Christians—what was left of Christianity, then?

Tauler found his peaceful grave in Strassburg. Boehme, after much controversy and delay, was finally

granted a Christian burial; but the cross on his grave, sent by a nobleman of Schwenckfeldian leanings, von Schweinichen, and von Franckenberg, a mystic, was destroyed by the mob. Nevertheless, we know where he lies. But Franck's year of death is uncertain, and where he found his last rest, is not known. Schwenckfeld was buried in secrecy, we can only assume where it was done.

They felt some triumphs, but they also tasted bitter defeat. They heard life's Yes and No, and they said Yes and No to life. Eckhart, whose fate warned Tauler, then Franck, Schwenckfeld, Boehme: they all were crucified by public opinion and Christianity; yet they did not despair. There was a soul-spark in them that flickered to the last moment. And when that last moment came, they did not recant.

Then they said aloud their last Yes.

\* \* \*

*Postscript.* The history of Schwenckfeldianism in Silesia and in Germany as a whole has not yet been written.<sup>48</sup> If undertaken, it will be the history of Schwenckfeld's ideas as alive in Weigel, Johann Arndt, and Boehme, in Johann Georg Gichtel and Quirin Kuhlmann, in Spener and Gottfried Arnold; it will be the history of his influence on the Silesian nobility among whom was Abraham von Franckenberg; it will be the history of Schwenckfeldian *pro* and *contra* among such half-forgotten or entirely forgotten men and women as Friedrich Breckling, Christian Hohburg, Ludwig Friedrich Gifftheil, Henriette Catharina von Gersdorf, Marga-



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retha Susanna Sprögel, Anna Katharina Scharfschmid, and many others. The Breckling-Hohburg controversy deserves mention, and their letters, also some by Schwenckfelders, concerning it are to be found in the *Schwenckfelder Library*; the obscure Gifftheil had a part in it. The books and lives of the three women remain to be investigated; Freifrau von Gersdorf's role in admitting the Silesian Schwenckfelders into the community of Count Zinzendorf's Brotherhood of Herrnhut is a phase worthy of representation. Among the many others who are now forgotten but who, some day, must find their place in history, will be the people, plain and poor, who found solace in Schwenckfeldian piety. Jacob Boehme had his friends among the learned, and a few were not learned; but Schwenckfeld wrote for everyone, learned or not, and the ignorant understood him well. Boehme the cobbler, remained an esoteric; the knight's, Schwenckfeld's name, was a symbol in wide areas of the open country and in entire villages. Without intention, Schwenckfeld had founded a sect with many local branches. Who will write this history? It will be a goodly task.

## ❧ CHAPTER FIVE ❧

### *Religious Existence: Pascal and Kierkegaard*

CAN IT BE that different causes make for like results? “*Natura non facit saltum*”, we are assured by the Latins, but that nature makes “leaps” is not a discovery of modern natural science alone. What about history? Are there historical phenomena that cannot be explained by the mechanism of cause and effect, but that constitute by their very being a ‘leap’? And what about man? The individual? Is regeneration, the spiritual rebirth about which Schwenckfeld speaks, is this transcending of the old natural Adam not a ‘leap’?

As far as history is concerned, we can say this much: The same type of a person can arise at different times and under different circumstances, a person that shakes off historical descent and not only turns against his environment but completely negates it by pulling himself spiritually out of it. Typology and anthropology confirm the appearance of people with the same characteristics for different reasons: there is the type that

eternally reappears, and there is man who remains unchanged. The causes that produced a Schwenckfeld in Germany, a Pascal in France, a Kierkegaard in Denmark were, to be sure, materially different, but like in *form*, and therefore their effects were like.

We know that the mystico-spiritual tradition of Germany from the Gothic Age through that of the Reformation up to the Baroque produced the stark, serious, even aggressive type of religious thinker and reformer: the Meister Eckhart with his *furor teutonicus* and the Jacob Boehme, the *philosophus teutonicus*. This type hardly ever denied his Germanic or at least mid-continental heritage; although there was Slavic influx especially in Silesia. In Western Europe, the exalted visionaries were usually more rationalistic and more given to tenderness in expression. But their language was universal, too. St. Theresa and St. John of the Cross, expounders of Spanish mysticism of the 16th century, extended their influence even as far as, again, Silesia, where Angelus Silesius wrote the most perfect alexandrines of his age, almost too smooth and Latin for the German taste. In Ignatius of Loyola a different type was born: a man of total asceticism and fanaticism who, with best intentions, founded the Society of Jesus, a society which nevertheless degenerated into a political propaganda machine of the Counter-Reformation and which was to become the object of Pascal's immortal ridicule and contempt.

During Schwenckfeld's and Ignatius' time, there arose in Spain, next to official Catholicism and next to tolerated or persecuted mysticism, the "evangelical

Catholicism" that found an outstanding exponent in Juan de Valdés.<sup>49</sup> This man had felt the effect of the general reformatory spirit that was alive outside the Iberian peninsula. In 1529 he published his *Dialogue on Christian Doctrine*, standing under the impact of Erasmus of Rotterdam; the book was followed by *The Christian Alphabet* which shows his spiritual conversion. Here the conviction of the inadequacy of human prudence to understand "the mystery of existence" enters his life. He had a faith that was all his own. No wonder, then, that he, too, was persecuted (like St. John of the Cross); all his religious publications were put in the Catholic Index of prohibited reading. Juan de Valdés stood in the 'left-wing' movement of radical Christianity; it is even admitted that he was affected by Tauler.

Further North in Europe, but still on the Western edge, in Holland, Cornelius Jansen was born. He was a contemporary of the Schwenckfeldian poet, Daniel Sudermann, and closer still, of Jacob Boehme; he was influenced profoundly by the father of Western soul-searching, Augustine, but to such a degree that hardly any trace of his own philosophy was left. His book *Augustinus* (1640) was the result. Despite his lack of originality, great fame was heaped upon Jansen, for he became the founder of "Jansenism", another Catholic reform movement with its center in Port Royal outside of Paris.<sup>50</sup> Blaise Pascal (1623-62) was to be its most illustrious disciple.

Pascal knew St. Theresa well, and despite the fact that Pascal was Pascal—only tautology explains the

phenomenon of genius—and that he was and made a ‘leap’ independently of any influences, such knowledge of spiritual kinship helps even the genius. Quite justly, St. John of the Cross has been compared to him. Pascal also knew of Nicholas of Cusa. And here we encounter something astonishing: Cusanus was the great elaborator of Meister Eckhart. Furthermore, we know that Spanish mysticism was affected by the same Master. The circle is complete: Pascal stood at a point in history where German mysticism came to him from the East through Cusanus and through Iberian mysticism from the South. Pascal, Frenchman, Catholic, rationalist, mathematician, and religious writer was open to German mysticism—yet his religious situation is and remains a ‘leap’ just as Schwenckfeld’s is. Both are the lone, free, radical individuals, islands only in the massive stream of history, yet islands that are able to stem the tide and cause floods never to be forgotten as catastrophes in the orderly flow of river-systems. Catastrophes! That is what they are, the Schwenckfeld, Pascal, Kierkegaard, disturbers of a deceiving peace, a nuisance to the citizen, rebels against false security, catastrophes in a life that was to be tranquil despite the abyss before which it stood.



## ❧ 2 ❧

IN BLAISE PASCAL, a genuine Christian life and mysticism blend in a particular fashion; for the life that he advocated to live stood in direct contrast to the life that he himself once lived, and his forsaking a life of scientific research and mathematical discoveries of great and universal impact was a decision consciously and deliberately made against the natural sciences. In Pascal we have one of the most celebrated forerunners of 20th century thought with its emphasis on authentic existence and its rejection of collective indifference.

Perhaps it may have been somewhat of a surprise to see Schwenckfeld, in our *Introduction*, classed as an existence-bound thinker and grouped together with such men as Pascal and Kierkegaard who have clearly and justly been claimed by modern "Existentialists" as theirs. However, there are many "Existentialists" who disagree among themselves as to their respective philosophy, some even denying any connection with "Existentialism" while others go so far as to deny any meaning to the very term. This "Ism," surely, is a poor and misleading word and has been misused to such an extent that any intelligent discussion of it has become almost impossible. When we compare Schwenckfeld to Pascal and Kierkegaard, the value of such comparison must come out of the study itself; the parallels must be meaningful and

concrete beyond any loose dealing in mere philosophical jargon.

Carefully speaking, Schwenckfeld and Pascal belong together because of their spiritual religion, their affiliation with mysticism, their rejection of the rationalistic 'systems', their opposition to organized and superficial Church-and-State Christianity. They cross Church lines and stand in the middle road, the road of the individualist.

On the other hand, we do not want to equate Schwenckfeld and Pascal. The one major difference is easily stated: The German was the apostle-type, the Frenchman exhausted himself in privacy. And yet, the former remained unjustly obscure while the latter achieved world fame. There is a paradox in the course of history that is startling. Not less paradoxical is the fact that with Pascal *wit* enters Christian controversy; there is also the strong calculating power of the mathematical genius who applies his analytical method to scholastic argumentation, and there is finally a literary charm that is mostly absent elsewhere.

For the observer of the history of ideas and religion it is probably not insignificant that Pascal had a grandfather who was for a time a Huguenot of Calvinistic leanings. The seed of dissent was sown. It bore fruit in the *Provincial Letters* with which Pascal undermined the reputation of the Jesuits. Noting the moral and religious degeneration around him, he attempted a vindication of Christian religion in his *Pensées*. But before this

he had his moment of religious ecstasy and conversion that completely changed his life.

As Schwenckfeld turned away from Luther, the systematist, so Pascal turned away from Descartes, the rationalist. The two illustrious Frenchmen knew each other: both great mathematicians, they nevertheless travelled ultimately in different directions. Descartes led a life absorbed in his thesis *Cogito ergo sum* which is directly opposed to the Christian *I am, therefore I think*. While Cartesius "postulated" God (a word used by the rationalist Kant), Pascal embraced Him. The one speculated on the Creator, the other started out with a conviction of His reality. Descartes had a system, Pascal a method.

For Pascal, the world consists of spheres which are entirely unrelated. "All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their productions, are not equal in value to the least feeling of love. This is of an order infinitely more exalted" (*Pensées*, Fragment 793).<sup>51</sup> Love has its own realm just as faith; an object of faith cannot be an object of reason, and vice versa. "The heart has its reason which reason does not know" (Fragm. 277). Science, including theology, has its practical values, but it is meaningless to human life. This is a simple maxim which the casual reader may well understand and yet not understand at all—he may understand it by the force of reason and fail to understand it in deeper layers. Especially in the 20th century we can observe this mental split: while we pay lip-service to religion, we build our entire life upon the assumption that the

sciences will put the finishing touch on man's glory on earth. And that is why we are always on the brink of self-destruction. Pascal, speaking of geometry, said, "I consider it to be the highest exercise of the mind, but at the same time I know it to be so unprofitable that I make little distinction between a man who is merely a geometrician and a skillful artisan. Therefore I call it the most beautiful trade in all the world, but after all it is only a trade, and I have often said that it is good to test but not to employ our capacities". Pascal employed himself religiously.

After his mystical experience, Pascal noted as his goal in life: "Total submission to Jesus Christ and my confessor". His Christology, although inspired from the Latin side, is in line with Schwenckfeld's. Pascal's *Mé-morial*, mainly the second part, deals with "Jesus the Way", with God as revealed in Jesus Christ, with the divinity of the Lord, and with the union between Him and the writer. But as a Catholic, he adds the "spiritual director", the priest, to Christ.

For a man like Pascal, however, there can be no absolute submission under *human* control. He found himself often at variance not only with Jansenism, but also with the official Catholic view-point. That the Jesuits would accuse him of heresy, is self-evident. Whenever he differed from Rome, he remained steadfast in his conviction. His belief in original sin, predestination, grace, and election had a Calvinistic bend that was certain to offend Catholics. In his belief in "regeneration" he came close to Schwenckfeld.<sup>52</sup> "By regeneration", he

writes in a letter, "God has freely withdrawn some from sin (which is veritable nothingness because it is contrary to God who is a veritable being) in order to give them a place in His church which is a veritable temple". But in his Eucharistic conception he followed the Roman institution. Needless to say, even here there was a divergence from the usual in as much as the communicant had to be an 'inward' partaker; in Pascal's criticism of Baptism, we see this clearly. In a *Comparison of the Christians of the Earliest Times with those of Today*—a title that in itself is indicative of the author's polemical purpose—people are accused of making use of baptism "in a manner so contrary to the intention of the Church that we cannot think of it without horror. People are scarcely reflecting any more on so great a benefit. . ." In our—Pascal's—days when "baptism precedes instruction, the teaching which was necessary for the Sacrament has become voluntary, and then neglected, and finally almost abolished." We see here justified, from the Catholic side, the Protestant reaction to the superficial handling of the Sacraments.

No wonder, then, that Pascal's attack upon the clergy was as bitter as Boehme's and as well-grounded as Schwenckfeld's. Concerning himself with the Inquisition which was to be introduced in France, he fears that "We shall see in no time at all that no one will be safe in his own home."<sup>53</sup> That had been true in Schwenckfeld's Germany (long before the Counter-Reformation) as a direct consequence of Luther's Reformation itself. Pas-



cal fears rightly for all liberty "when we are treated as the clergy seeks to do." In a *Factum for the Priests of Paris* he characterizes the state of Christendom with as much sarcasm as lucidity. Instead of "adjusting the life of men to the precepts of Jesus Christ, these new theologians have undertaken to adjust the precepts and rules of Jesus Christ to the interests, passions, and pleasures of men."

Naturally, Pascal's attack was returned. He joined Schwenckfeld's ranks as "ignoramus", "bad joker", "impostor", "slanderer", "cheat", "heretic"—the common by-word for any independent mind—, "disguised Calvinist", "possessed by a legion of devils", only that these metaphors emanated from Catholics instead of from Protestants. As we see it today, this abuse fell back upon the abusers.



NOWHERE IS IT seen more clearly how timely—timelessly timely—Schwenckfeld is than in comparison with such men as Pascal and Kierkegaard. Pascal and Kierkegaard have been presented in contrapuntal method often enough, but Schwenckfeld's melody has been missing so far. It is Kierkegaard who has especially been claimed to be the father of modern existence-bound ideology. He is claimed by fundamental ontology (Heidegger), by the philosophy of the encompassing

(Jaspers), by atheistic nihilism and existential communism (Sartre *et al.*), by heroic nihilism (Camus), by the new spirituality (Berdyayev, Greek-Orthodox), by the philosophy of loyalty (Marcel, Catholic), by renewed Judaism (Buber), by dialectical theology (Barth, Protestant), and many others. What type of a man must Kierkegaard have been to allow for so diversified a group of descendants? What multitude of mental colors must he have been able to show in chameleon-like manner? Can this have been only *one* man? Or was he, perhaps, in the hundred years since his death 're-interpreted' beyond a point where he would not recognize himself anymore if he were alive today? (Did he, in other words, have the same fate as his master, Jesus Christ?) Those readers who look for a 'startling' and worldly 'interesting' person will be disappointed. Kierkegaard had only one vital concern: a true religion. 'A true religion?' the reader will ask, 'What a bore!' and turn away.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), the quixotic Copenhagen extravagant, had an entirely different temperament from either Pascal or Schwenckfeld. With him, Scandinavian analytical methods, skepticism of a burning kind, even self-torture enters into religious contemplation, remindful of such probing and almost masochistic minds as August Strindberg's and Knut Hamsun's. With him we have perhaps the keenest dissecting intellect in the history of religion since Augustinus, and the theology of existence gets its peculiar, modern Protestant color. But here, in contrast to Schwenckfeld and Pascal, mysticism is absent. To say, however, that with

Kierkegaard's dictum of the "infinite qualitative difference between God and man" we have the opposite of mysticism, would simplify matters beyond logic. Surely, mysticism as it once was alive is no longer prevalent. Does that mean that mysticism is dead altogether? The answer can quickly be No, because there are, among 20th century writers of fiction and non-fiction, many who consider themselves in the mystical tradition and find support in this respect among their interpreters. At the same time, mysticism where it is not museum-like but living, is vastly different from old and ancient mystical literature. If mysticism is concerned with the unity of man and his origin—whether this origin be God, a Godhead, gods, nature, substance, matter, Nothingness or Allness—then this concern is alive as long as man is alive; and measuring all mysticism by the yardstick of medieval Christian mysticism would be folly. We may even find today a form of thought, or life, which according to criteria applied by the theologian or professor of history is the very opposite of 'mysticism', yet to itself and the sensitive reader may be a modern form of mysticism congenial to modern mentality. Or we may experience a form of thought, or life, which denies mysticism yet is in a dialectical way related to it; it is related to it by attraction and repulsion, attracted secretly and openly repelling it. Such a dialectical relation to mysticism may be Søren Kierkegaard's. The negative mysticism of Schwenckfeld may have become here the dialectical negation of mysticism. "Mysticism", Kierke-

gaard asserts, "has not the patience to wait for God's revelation." <sup>54</sup>

When the historian of religion, Joachim Wach, published in 1951 his book *Types of Religious Experience*, he included a chapter on Schwenckfeld in which he states that, although the Silesian knight is "one of the worthiest and most attractive figures in the era of the Reformation—nay, in the history of Christianity", he has not yet found his "niche" in history. If we want to furnish this niche and set Schwenckfeld among the existence-bound religious seekers, we find confirmation in Wach's work. Repeatedly he draws parallels, however brief they may be, between the German and the Dane. Schwenckfeld, he asserts, belongs among others with Kierkegaard (not with Schleiermacher), with practical existence-seekers and not with scholars, theoreticians, and the like.

Both Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard aimed at life, at the individual, at the person's fate Here and There. Let us remember what Schwenckfeld said in a letter to the Landgraf Philip von Hessen in 1534, that "each man must himself account" to God (V, 101); he repeated this conviction numerous times. In fact, it is the foundation of his religion. Therefore, he never intended to found or join a sect. The true knight of faith, Kierkegaard remarks somewhere, is never a sectarian. He lives a life that is his own, and if he is a Christian, he lives a Christian life: "a right, true Christian life" (Schwenckfeld in a letter of 1528, III, 41). But escape, or withdrawal, into a monastery does not help (V, 613 f, 617,

739); the voice of the apostle must sound without the cloister's walls. If Kierkegaard once advocates return to the monastery from which Luther fled, it means a return to individual religion.

Both Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard had their religious experience early in life, the former at an age of twenty-eight, the latter at twenty-five. Both rejected the 'systems'; Kierkegaard was violently opposed to Hegel as Schwenckfeld to Luther (and the Dane had, mildly speaking, an ambiguous attitude toward Luther). The two were, financially independent, prolific writers, using various pen-names to hide their identity; they sought no personal success but success with the human person and his salvation. They stayed lonely, unmarried (that Kierkegaard renounced his engagement to Regina Olsen for *pietistic* reasons, must be taken into consideration); in their solitude, they felt nevertheless the attack of their 'Christian' brothers. Persecuted, soon half or wholly forgotten, their respective ideas had a different fate: while Schwenckfeld's flowered into Pietism without being recognized as his, Kierkegaard's flowered into 'Existentialism' where they cannot be recognized any more as his. The German and the Dane died without priestly consolation; Kierkegaard even refused the minister.

The major difference between Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard lies in their attitude toward their own function in life. The famous author of *Either-Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *The Concept of Dread*, *The Sickness unto Death*, to name just a few epoch-making books,



contented himself with being a writer, a "poet", as he himself said. Schwenckfeld, however, was a layman-preacher in addition to being a writer; he sought the *direct* influence of the spoken word upon the mind and heart of the people. He converted many, he attempted an apostolic existence. Kierkegaard remained aloof; *his* influence was, long after his death, through the letter, and it was an influence upon the intellect. Both Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard pointed toward God—sometimes in identical, sometimes in different ways, but generally with the same religious undertone; in their respective lives, there was a 'qualitative difference'.

Their sameness of purpose and often of means, is obvious. Kierkegaard proclaimed his own "Stillstand" by suggesting to the population of Copenhagen that they leave the Church. What both men wanted was an 'inward' religion. Whereas Schwenckfeld prepared Pietism, Kierkegaard was raised under its influence.<sup>55</sup> In opposition to the Lutheran system of salvation, the Protestant mystics of the 16th and 17th centuries, the Pietists, Schwenckfeld and his followers, put all the emphasis on the personal life and commitment of the Christian individual. The old Kierkegaard passed this pietistic heritage on to his son Søren.

In his *Journals*, Kierkegaard admired the "true and heartfelt" words of Jacob Boehme to "hold fast to *one* thought" [the Good] in the moment of temptation. The learned Dane had, in addition to his pietistic education, acquired enough knowledge during his Copenhagen student years in theology to be able to trace intellec-

tually his spiritual heritage. In Berlin, he received, by way of a curious detour, German Baroque mysticism in an idealistic form from Schelling. The fact that in the background of Boehme's theosophy was Schwenckfeld, and that consequently in the background of German philosophical idealism (from Hamann over the young Goethe to Franz von Baader) were, among others, Boehme plus Schwenckfeld, he did not perceive. But it is now well known to us that Schwenckfeld's ideas infiltrated the writings of Arndt and Boehme, and that Schwenckfeld and Arndt were read enthusiastically by Christian Hohburg whose followers stood in a lively exchange of ideas with the Pietist August Hermann Francke in Halle; Philip Jakob Spener, who came from a Schwenckfeldian environment near Strassburg, became the founder of Pietism proper. Pietism, the only great religious force in Germany of the 18th century, was the spiritual flame that helped to kindle German literature and philosophy of the Classical and Romantic period, i. e. German idealism to which Kierkegaard was exposed and which he accepted with Schelling but rejected with Hegel. Hamann and Lessing, who were of the first generation of German idealism, he admired greatly.

How did German Pietism enter Denmark? The city of Halle, situated slightly north of the middle of Germany, had become the center of practical Pietism with Francke's foundation of schools, orphanage, and a publishing house; from here, Pietism spread over North Germany to the coast of the Baltic Sea, to Baltic prov-

inces, and to Scandinavia. Prince Carl, brother of Fred-eric IV (1699-1730), King of Denmark, was a pietist. Christian VI, who became king in 1730, was a pietist himself and did much for the toleration of Pietism in his country. Count Zinzendorf, pietistic founder of the Brotherhood of Herrenhut, was to get in 1731 an office in Denmark for the administration of Pietism there. The plans came to naught, and even the Danebrog-medal which he received had to be returned. In any case, Pietism was established in Denmark in the course of the 18th century, and Kierkegaard the older was a product of it.<sup>56</sup>

Schwenckfeld was the 'first knight' of existence-bound Pietism, and Kierkegaard became the theoretician of the 'knight of faith' in pietistic armor. In between, there was the Pietism proper which we know as a religious movement that emphasized religious existence, but which was less radically individualistic and more ecclesiastically minded, which engaged in a pious mode of life and favored quiet conventicles; often it grew, to its own disadvantage, into family-circle religiousness or even into sickly sentimentality, and seldom did it possess the knightly qualities displayed by Schwenckfeld or described by Kierkegaard.

It is understandable, then, to read in an article on Kierkegaard and Protestantism why some of the Dane's favorite expressions, like, for example, "existence" and "reality" should be inexplicable without a reference to the ideas of Pietism.<sup>57</sup> But we must qualify this statement and add what branch of Pietism we have in mind. Cer-

tainly, if we think of Schwenckfeld, the relationship is striking. Schwenckfeld's concept of the creature, to begin with, is not so much to remind us, dialectically, of the creator as maker of the creature, but of the discrepancy between God and man (Pietz, diss. p. 30); the reason for this is their "infinite qualitative difference", as Kierkegaard would say. Schwenckfeld, therefore, was always suspicious of the slightest trace of pantheism, of even Tauler and especially of Sebastian Franck. Only with Christ could there be any real and direct union; Christ was the only 'person' whom we could grasp because He had, in all his godliness, become man (although not creature). Pietz recognizes clearly this Kierkegaardian element of the infinite qualitative difference between God and man (p. 54). But to complete the comparison: Kierkegaard had no peculiar Christology as Schwenckfeld had, and the Christological *unio mystica* which is possible for the German is absent for the Dane. Christian existence, then, for Schwenckfeld was an abyss into which Christ descended for our salvation; for Kierkegaard, it was a depth out of which man had to climb himself by virtue of his existential freedom. Only after application of his freedom was faith bestowed upon man by God.

Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard viewed life as utter misery, as exposed to the major elements of dread and fear. Of the two kinds of fear that Schwenckfeld knows, the one and less significant state is man's ordinary relation to punishment for sin, while the other is comparable to a child's respectful and loving relationship to his

father. It is the latter one that leads us to faith (V, 77 f). The "knight of faith", as the knight from Silesia himself says, in his great fear, need, and danger is pushed into a corner so that his physical powers become meaningless; in this situation in which *all* corners become too narrow, he is dependent upon prayer and he has to plead to his "fore-fighter" Jesus Christ to help him to gain freedom into the open.<sup>58</sup> This situation often looks so hopeless, however, that the knight in his fear cannot pray; but if he at least "keeps his eyes toward the heavens", he will be aided. (V, 89). Kierkegaard built his whole philosophy upon a similar base. "From dread comes despair", says one of his interpreters, "from despair the sense of sin, from the sense of sin the 'instant' of choice, from the choice of Christ, faith itself" (M. Channing-Pearce, *The Terrible Crystal*, p. 27). The "instant" is the "leap" toward true religion. Faith follows the act of the will; while the act of will is made by man, faith is given by God. Here, too, is a combination of will and predestination that differs, however, from Schwenckfeld's own account of its greater stress on freedom. But there is the "leap" in either theology: no gradual conversion, only radical rebirth of the *homo novo*, the new Adam. The once-born creature renews itself in the twice-born soul.

From dread and fear, we arrive at faith. Kierkegaard, in the true Schwenckfeldian sense, says about the *nova creatura*: "But he becomes another man; not in the frivolous sense of becoming another individual of the same quality as before, but in the sense of becoming a man



of a different quality, or as we may call him: a new creature" (*Philosophical Fragments*, p. 162). Continuing Schwenckfeld's line of thought, he adds: "... while it is indeed possible to be baptized *en masse*, it is not possible to be born anew *en masse*." Outward Christianity, material sacramentarianism, church collectivity are here rejected just as in the days of the Silesian knight's fight against a petrified Christendom.

The old Adam performs the *salto mortale* from a pseudo-life to the absolute commitment of individual religious existence. While the old Adam dies, the new Adam is born in him. It takes fire and ashes for the Phoenix to arise to immortality. The weaker the individual, the stronger God in him; the stronger the individual, the weaker God in him. But this, too, is individualism, only in an intensified, introverted manner. In contrast to mysticism, here the infinite qualitative difference between God and man remains even in total self-annihilation, for Kierkegaard has no *unio mystica*. He has negated mysticism, he is the man with patience; but if he waits long enough, if he shows the patience necessary for the last moment—what will happen then? Did Kierkegaard refute mysticism because mysticism is nothing to speak about? Did he refute it because he was waiting practically for it? The dialectics of mysticism has led here, we may presume, to its own negation for the sake of secret affirmation. This is a paradox that we infer from Kierkegaard's own paradoxical theology.

There is no paradox and no dialectics, however, in Kierkegaard's outspoken rejection of pantheism; for

while mysticism may negate the will, it is based upon the person, and exactly this concept of the person—or of existence—is as Kierkegaardian as it is non-pantheistic. The Dane knew his Tauler, yet he was more careful than other 19th century readers of the German mystic not to confuse him with pantheists (and in this respect he was at least as careful as Schwenckfeld). Kierkegaard rejected pantheism not only because of its religious contents, but also because it was a system. The concept of “existence”, he says in the *Postscript* (p. 204), is alien to both nature-theology and the philosophical system of whatever make; but it is “existence” that counts, not the system. If there is any form of ‘resignation’, it is a “purely philosophical movement” (*Fear and Trembling*, p. 127). “For the act of resignation, faith is not required”. We see in this criticism of philosophy from the viewpoint of religion how the old mystical resignation and surrender is deprived of its ontological character, it is not even anymore the psychic ‘inner surrender’ as Schwenckfeld knew it; it has become, in the 19th century, a matter of consciousness and of philosophy. It has been shoved into the sphere of thinking; and no longer is it a matter of living. But the Kierkegaardian “knight of faith” is the one who stays in existence. *He* has to fight it out till the very end from a finite position: that of personal existence. He is, to be sure, an “enthusiast” (Kierkegaard uses this term), but his enthusiasm leads him even less into mystical ecstasy than Schwenckfeld’s “Schwärmerei”. It is the enthusiasm of faith that finds satisfaction in faith.<sup>59</sup>

And the object of faith is Christ: "one must either believe in Him or be offended", says Kierkegaard (*Training in Christianity*, p. 394). "For to 'know' signifies exactly that the reference is not to Him. It is true enough that history furnishes knowledge in abundance, but knowledge demolishes Jesus Christ." The attack upon Christendom that has no training in Christianity is as severe, or more so, as in Schwenckfeld's writings. "Christendom has done away with Christianity", is Kierkegaard's dictum (p. 397), "without being quite aware of it. The consequence is that, if anything is to be done, one must try again to introduce Christianity into Christendom." In genuine pietistic spirituality, man must become a "contemporary with Christ" (p. 409). "It means that everyone for himself, in quiet inwardness before God, shall humble himself before what it means in the strictest sense to be a Christian. . ." (p. 411).

Christianity does not exist—Kierkegaard says it simply and truthfully (*Attack upon 'Christendom'*, p. 32).<sup>60</sup> Christianity did not exist in Schwenckfeld's time, as Schwenckfeld said it just as truthfully, and it does not exist today (we may add). Baptism, The Lord's Supper, Church attendance—Kierkegaard regards all this as re-paganized religion. For him a person has no true Christian religion if he just adheres to outward forms. "A person has no religion; but by reason of family circumstances, first because the mother got into the family way, the paterfamilias in turn got into embarrassment owing to that, and then with the ceremonies connected with the sweet little baby—by reason of all this

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a person has—the Evangelical Lutheran religion” (p. 206). This is the “first picture” Kierkegaard gives of “The sort of person they call a Christian”. The “second picture” concerns the Eucharist. “So two or four times a year this man [a tradesman] puts on his best clothes and goes to communion. Up comes a priest. . . And thereupon the priest celebrates the Holy Communion, from which the tradesman, or rather both tradesmen (both the priest and the honest citizen), return home to their customary way of life, only that one of them (the priest) cannot be said to return home to his customary way of life, for in fact he had never left it, but rather had been functioning as a tradesman” (p. 207). Kierkegaard adds, “And this is what one dares to offer to God under the name of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, the Communion in Christ’s body and blood!” His disgust with such degenerated form of ‘religion’ has the same basis from which Schwenckfeld proclaimed the “Still-stand”—the suspension of the observance of the Eucharist because of our lack of understanding of the sacred event. Let us just recall some of Schwenckfeld’s criticism in order to make sure we see him and the Dane properly together. The German scolds the preachers for, among other things, furthering sensual liberties, arrogance, and negligence of the good (III, 109). There is a treatise on the fact that *The Church is not reformed according to the Apostolic Standard* (III, 489). The Church of today is fallen (IV, 60). The “system” of the theologians is outwardly literary and “untruthful” (IV, 62). The theologians “are like re-painted graves which out-

wardly appear neat, but inwardly they are full of dead bones and of filth" (64). Catholicism is nothing but sectarianism and worldly power under the pretence and name of Christ; Lutheranism is without the spirit of Christ or God and teaches a wrong faith in the letter, it is a godless thing indeed; these two 'beliefs' are not far from the Antichrist (IX, 499). "Christian life" today is worse than life with the heathens, real Christianity is "darkened, buried, fallen, and unknown as the spirit of Christ" (835).

Christianity does not exist—Kierkegaard's verdict which has become so famous as if it were unique is but a repetition of what Schwenckfeld clearly stated three hundred years earlier. And the positive side of the Dane's teaching, namely inwardness, had been lived by Schwenckfeld long before it became famous through Kierkegaard's books. And there were others before Schwenckfeld.

## ❧ 4 ❧

"AND IT CAME TO pass after these things, that God did **A** prove Abraham, and said unto him: 'Abraham'; and he said: 'Here am I.' And He said: 'Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.' And Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with



him, and Isaac his son; and he cleaved the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him. On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off. And Abraham said unto his young men: 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come back to you.' And Abraham took the wood of the burnt-offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife; and they went both of them together. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, and said: 'My father.' And he said: 'Here am I, my son'. And he said: 'Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?' And Abraham said: 'God will provide Himself the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.' So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said: 'Abraham, Abraham.' And he said: 'Here am I.' And he said: 'Lay not thy hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him; for now I know that thou art a God-fearing man, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me.' And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns. And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son."

This Biblical account found significant interpretations by Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard who, in all their differences, saw in the Jewish patriarch a central figure of Christian religion. (Whether the father-image played any important role in the development of those interpretations, is not our concern here, since we deal with the history of ideas and religion rather than with biography or depth-psychology.) For Schwenckfeld, as early as 1527, Christ is already seen effective in Abraham (II, 696 ff, *Vocatio Abrahæ*). Abraham must first experience the Word of the Cross, i.e. mortification of the flesh, suffering and need; only then can he experience the next higher stage, the Word of Life "which is no other than the one crucified living Christ". Abraham must give up his ordinary life, overcome even the 'ethical' stage of life (as Kierkegaard would say), that is the life of the home and with friends, and he must endure hardships; finally, he must annihilate self-love. The old Adam must die. He must also give up wife and son. While he loses his most beloved ones, he instead gains faith. Abraham is promised to be the seed of all future messiahs. In him, the work of Christ, suffering and passion, is already working spiritually. He has become, beyond outward circumcision, a real believer. "Abraham has received and accepted the word of Christ" (p. 698). Thus, Old and New Testament are brought into unity through the person of Abraham. Schwenckfeld saw Christ's work extended into two directions: not only into the future, as it is commonly understood, but also into the past. Christ, being the true

son of God, *must* embrace all times, because in His deity He is not limited to time and space. Thus, He can save men posthumously. While Abraham may be the *person* who brings Old and New together, it is the spirit of Christ who makes such unity possible.

In a book by Sebastian Coccius of 1546 (*Corp. Schw.* IX, 941 ff) it is affirmed that Jesus Christ was descended from man, from a creature, from Abraham. Turning to Schwenckfeld, Coccius attacks in him the belief that "Jesus Christ has His beginning in no creature" which is blasphemy (p. 950). Schwenckfeld noted, in essence, on the margin of his copy that the Lutheran author misunderstood the Bible; because for Schwenckfeld, the Bible said that Christ was no creature, and for Schwenckfeld the believer, all genuine ancestry was spiritual. Abraham, then, although human and creaturely, *had* the paradoxical distinction of being (spiritually) Christ's ancestor, in addition to being one of the first to be spiritually reborn in the actually non-creaturely Christ. In a later letter, of 1548, to Regina Königsberger, Schwenckfeld says that as Isaac was the son of promise to Abraham, so Christ is the son of promise to us all.

To the theologian who believes that Christ was truly a man and a creature and that He was an immanent part of history, a historical figure, it is not astonishing to see Abraham treated as an ancestor of Christ. But for Schwenckfeld, this was entirely and paradoxically different: Abraham, the creature, should have been an ancestor of Christ, the non-creaturely person! Two names were linked here that *had*, in effect, no link, except

spiritually. Abraham thus stands out above all other names of Biblical history and reaches into the sphere beyond and above history: into the sphere of the pure spirit. This is a paradox which Kierkegaard, with a new twist, was to develop into a new theology.

In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard asked quite methodically and yet with a burning heart the crucial question: "Is there such a thing as a teleological suspension of the ethical?" (p. 129 ff). This seemingly scholastic problem couched in a learned terminology must not scare the reader away. The question can be restated in simpler words: Is there such a thing as the suspension of moral values for the purpose of higher values? It is typically and quixotically Kierkegaard: to express a Christian message in terms borrowed from Greek philosophy, cloud the meaning but direct the reader in the end to a clear solution.

The ethical, Kierkegaard says, is the universal, i.e. it applies to everyone. The end, or purpose ("telos"), of the ethical lies in itself; it has nothing outside itself. In other words: We do good for good's sake. Even if a "tragic hero", such as Agamemnon or Brutus, sacrifice his own child, it is only for the "higher" good of the state; the higher good of the state is, morally speaking, higher than individual good. Still, the purpose of the moral act is something moral. But what in the case of Abraham? For whose good did *he* want to sacrifice his son Isaac? For an individual good? No. For a "higher expression of the ethical", for the community? No. Abraham did it for "God's sake, and (in complete

identity with this) for his own sake. He did it for God's sake, because God required this proof of his faith; for his own sake he did it in order that he might furnish the proof."

Abraham is no tragic hero whose acts are meaningful in relation to a group of people. Abraham is alone, isolated. He is the "particular" individual ("the individual as the particular") who stands "in an absolute relation to the absolute" (God). The isolated individual has a direct relation to God, however far and however "qualitatively different" He may be. Abraham heard God's command and attempted to fulfill it. He was ready to sacrifice his own son—ought he "to be prosecuted and convicted of murder"? No, although there is no 'objective', outside evidence of God's command. "Abraham cannot be mediated", says Kierkegaard. Abraham's position is faith; faith is the paradox; and in faith it is possible "to suspend the ethical" (e.g. laws against murder) for a "higher" purpose (sacrifice). Therefore, there *is* such a thing as the teleological suspension of the ethical. This suspension has as its purpose the religious act.

The ethical may be the universal, but the particular is absolutely absolute: the individual is supreme in his religious situation. This is the paradox of Abraham. Abraham, therefore, is the lonely "knight of faith". "A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers—but not a knight of faith. When a man enters upon the way, in a certain sense the hard way of the tragic hero, many will be able to give him counsel; to him who follows the narrow way of faith, no one can give counsel, him



no one can understand. Faith is a miracle, and yet no man is excluded from it; for that in which all human life is unified is passion, and faith is a passion."

This passage, while typically Kierkegaard's, reads nevertheless like a passage also from Schwenckfeld; the "narrow way of faith" is almost literally a reminder of the German's Middle Way. And because in this sphere of religious concern the path itself is indeed so narrow, the descriptions—from whatever source—are narrowed down to a few singularly characteristic phrases. That, for the radical Christian, there is but one word, one thing, one phenomenon, namely faith, and but one object of faith, namely Christ, is as much a tautology as the deepest and only truth. To be a Christian is to follow Christ, to be a Christian is to *be* Christian, a Christian is a Christian—what else can one say? And that is what both Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard say again and again. And that is what Christians forget again and again. So repetition is absolutely necessary.

Schwenckfeld was, in the double sense of the word, the knight of faith whom Kierkegaard described. Schwenckfeld, forsaking home, house, and heritage; outcast, prosecuted, isolated, martyr and witness of truth; who died in hiding and was buried we do not know where: strong in faith and obedience to the voice he had heard, Schwenckfeld lived the truth of Kierkegaard's paradox that the individual is superior to the universal, if the matter is religion. Kierkegaard described the narrow path of faith, Schwenckfeld preached it (II, 62, 500) and lived it, too. "The real, true Christian faith",

says he, "is a heavenly gift and divine force from above" (II, 503), nothing less than a miracle; he preached to everyone and attempted to teach that everyone was open to this gift from grace. It is a "secret" (III, 12), yet understandable to all. Faith is spiritually an "enduring seizure" ("beständige ergriffung").<sup>61</sup> It is a passion—"passion" is the old German meaning of "ergreifen"; it is significant that Schwenckfeld uses this word. To say of a person, in modern German, that he is "ergriffen" is one of the strongest ways of denoting that he is "deeply stirred", "deeply affected", "struck". It is a word that denotes a two-way action: it may mean, in Schwenckfeld's "ergriffung", that man is actively seizing and taking hold of faith; also, it is the fact that one is "possessed", seized from the outside, in a passive, suffering state, the state of "passion". Passion is just such a state: it is both actively longing for something and passively—hopelessly passively—being in the fangs of the object of longing. It is both action and surrender, freedom and surrender, a freedom that reaches beyond itself and loses itself in the engagement. That was Schwenckfeld's fate: he was engaged beyond retreat.

Kierkegaard, on the occasion of the death of some mediocre bishop who had been called *post mortem* a "witness of truth", thundered out against such perversion of Christian values. Christ's way is no longer Christian's way—Christ's "way" of the New Testament was "in humiliation, hated, forsaken, persecuted, condemned to suffer in this world" (*Attack upon Christendom*, p. 21). If anybody came close to *this* way, the Middle

Way, it was Caspar von Schwenckfeld. Kierkegaard himself did not, and he knew it; he knew he lacked strength and even faith. He remained a critic of Christendom; apostles become witnesses of truth. Schwenckfeld in his spiritual individualism seems to transcend even the possibility of being a witness at all. Just like Abraham, the Christian individual is immediately and radically isolated toward God. Each is on his own. The "particular" individual is the only real individual. To be witness implies to be witness of something for somebody who was *not* a witness. The Christian particular individual, the knight of faith, however, is not such a witness of something that takes place outside himself; everything that takes place, and that really matters, takes place within himself, at his core and heart; of such an inward event, there can be no witness of something. And there can be no witness for somebody, because if the religious experience should be genuine, it is an individual and non-communicable event. Abraham's situation cannot be communicated. Abraham is the paradox. The knight of faith is beyond being a witness and beyond the communicable truth. To be a witness of the truth is to be a witness of God, or Christ, Himself who is the truth. The knight of faith is no longer a witness of the truth—he is the knight of faith, and as such he sets an example.<sup>62</sup> He who will follow him, shall try. But he who tries must not expect a message from his forerunner. He must be alone, too.

Kierkegaard, the philosopher, or theologian, of existence wrote about Christian existence and went at the

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same time into polemical seclusion. His life as a whole set no example—one is almost tempted to say: on the contrary, it is suspect of pathology—, and even his theology of existence has borne fruit in a way that he himself neither desired nor foresaw. Schwenckfeld, on the other hand, *lived* Christian existence according to the pattern Christ set and which Kierkegaard attempted to theoretically reestablish. Schwenckfeld *existed* in Christian existence. Why was he forgotten? No doubt, the distance of time and the intellectual distance from his old-fashioned vocabulary removed him from our interest. But the life of the Silesian knight of faith should have “cried out after his death”, as Kierkegaard expected of his own.

## ❧ CHAPTER SIX ❧

### *The Question of Abraham*

ABRAHAM, the knight of faith, ready to sacrifice his own son—is he possible today?<sup>63</sup> Who would do as Abraham? In other words: Is Kierkegaard's teleological suspension of the ethical possible in our time?

Today, no doubt, any man seized in a position resembling Abraham's on the mountain would be held either for insanity or attempted filicide. But that was true also in Kierkegaard's time, or Schwenckfeld's, for that matter, if not in Abraham's own. Abraham, too, was subject to the revenge of people who did *not* hear the voice of God. Abraham heard the voice of God and did as he was told to. The question we have to ask is a logical one, and it is one which is not foreign to thinkers of the 20th century. It has been asked by men who stand in the spiritual-mystical tradition and who emphasize, as a modern form of that tradition, religious individual existence. Abraham is ready to sacrifice Isaac according to God's command—but "Kierkegaard here takes for granted something that cannot be taken for



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granted even in the world of Abraham", says Martin Buber, "much less in ours" (*The Suspension of Ethics*, p. 226). "He does not take into consideration the fact that the problematic position of the decision of faith is preceded by the problematic situation of the hearing itself: Who is it whose voice one hears? For Kierkegaard it is self-evident because of the Christian tradition in which he grew up that he who demands the sacrifice is none other than God. But for the Bible, at least for the Old Testament, it is not, without further question, self-evident. Indeed a certain 'instigation' to a forbidden action is even ascribed in one place to God (II Samuel 24:1) and in another to Satan (I Chronicles 21:1)."

Kafka, also standing like Buber in the East European Jewish tradition, has shown in his novel *The Castle* how "officials" of the "Castle" ask immoral acts from the "villagers" who are punished if disobedient. But what are we to do if thrown into such a situation? If a fate similar to Abraham's is ours? *Where does the Voice come from?* Whose Voice is it? There are voices enough, surely, which have asked us a thousand times in the name of God to sacrifice our most beloved ones. Was God *in* those voices? Did He speak directly to others who conveyed His message?

As far as *I* am concerned—and the '*I*' is here introduced by necessity in such a personal matter as religion—I have not heard God's voice. Who has? Who can say today: God has spoken to *me*? Who of our friends or acquaintances, who of our neighbors and associates, who of our countrymen can boast of having heard the

voice of God? God to me, as well as to the general consciousness of the age, has been silent. Because God is, and has been for some time, silent, it is said of God that He has retracted (Hölderlin), that He is dead (Nietzsche), that He is of no concern (whether dead or not: Heidegger, Sartre). But this 'absence' of God dates back further than just to the 19th century. Schwenckfeld relied upon Christ, human though not creaturely, because God Himself was inaccessible as God should be as God. Perhaps we may even say, it is the 'absence' of God that man *always* experiences, just as much as the chosen individual experiences the voice of God *on certain occasions*. There is no age in which God is present to the fullest or in which God is totally absent. The dialectics of religion demands absence *and* presence; without doubt, there is no true faith, fear makes for hope, and hate is vanquished by love.

So then, Abraham is the lonely individual of faith of *any* age. Even in his own time, *he was the exception*. And he escaped punishment by his fellow-men because he told nobody of the intended sacrifice. In fact, he said to his companions that Isaac and he would be back. Did he lie? At least he concealed something. He did not tell the whole truth. But his faith was so strong that he *knew* God would spare Isaac. But then: he "took the knife to slay his son." He took the knife *to slay* his son. No conditions set, no hesitancy, no scruples, no fear and no trembling. (At least the Biblical epic is silent about it.) He was ready to slay Isaac. Abraham was ready then, and Abraham would be ready today. But today,

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there is no more voice of God and no ram in the thicket. Such miracles happen no more. Why not? Is there no more such objective reality in which God can take foot? Is there no more such subjective reality of faith of which miracles spring? (Because miracles as such have to be *believed*, even if they happen.) Or do such miracles happen?

That is the question of Abraham. This is the question of any time and our time. Do miracles happen? And the answer must be No, as far as I—as far as we are concerned. And the answer may be Yes if we have the faith of Abraham, of Schwenckfeld, of Kierkegaard. For Abraham and Schwenckfeld and Kierkegaard, for the knight of faith there are those two realities: the reality of God, and the reality of faith, the objective and the subjective reality. The knight of faith is the one who lives in both.

This teleological suspension of the ethical—we shudder. Where is the father who would slay his own son? He existed, and, it is true, he still exists; but he is not, or hardly, the knight of faith, he is the 'tragic hero' who sacrifices his son for a 'higher' good: the state, the community, the people. We still shudder. Who would slay, as a 'knight of faith', his son 'uselessly' for the Unseen? Would we blame him for rejecting the command to slay his son? Would we blame him for refusing to have his son sacrificed by someone else? Would we have the courage to tell him that God, after all, had *His* son sacrificed on the Cross?

Pain, says the playwright Georg Büchner, is the rock

of atheism. He who loses his own son—will he not deny justice? Will he not question the meaning of life and the existence of God?

But: Isaac was not killed. All we can say is that Abraham was *ready* for the sacrifice. Or even less: According to *Genesis 22* it looks *as if* Abraham would have been ready for the sacrifice which, however, does not take place. Would he have done it? A purely hypothetical question. Abraham said they would be back. A lie? A concealment? A promise to return even if God had *not* substituted the ram for Isaac—to return *with* Isaac? An indication that Abraham would *not* have obeyed God? That he would have stopped in the very last second, after he took the knife if the “angel of the Lord” would have come just somewhat later? Between the taking of the knife and the voice of the angel—an eternity passed. All we know is that Abraham held the knife in his hand—he did not touch Isaac, there was at least a knife’s length between father and son. This knife’s length is an eternity. It is the eternity of the doubt in God, of the denial of God, and of the faith in God—which did Abraham choose? Doubt, denial, faith? We do not know. For the “angel of the Lord” was suddenly there. We do not know whether Abraham would have killed Isaac. All we know is that it was not necessary because a ram was substituted. A miracle happened. And thus Abraham became the knight of faith who obeyed as far as *Genesis 22* goes.

But we must ask another question, hypothetical as it may be: What, if Abraham *would* have slain Isaac?

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What if he had resisted the "temptation" to be merely good and actually fulfilled God's command? It is entirely possible to regard God's command to slay Isaac *also* as a temptation the resistance of which would merit the honor of God who punished the murderer Cain. It is entirely possible to imagine God's wrath on Abraham for having yielded to the temptation to go beyond the moral law (although He appreciated Abraham's obedience, up to a point). For God could have asked: Why do you make yourself a slave of Me? Have I not given you judgment to distinguish between good and evil? Have I not given you laws? Must you follow Me blindly, and can you not use the freedom, little as it may be, that I have given you in order to give you dignity? I have tempted you, and you have yielded. And this is, perhaps, the meaning of the epic: not that Abraham was absolutely obedient, but that God wanted no slaying and spared Abraham, the man confused over God's voice, the sin of killing. That is the reason He sent the ram. God wants obedience, yes, and He wanted to see how far Abraham would go. But the lesson may be, contrary to Kierkegaard's theory, *that God wanted no teleological suspension of the ethical*. Kierkegaard says that there is a teleological suspension of the ethical—but actually, there is none. Isaac lived. The knight of faith is the man who obeys—but if he killed, what would happen to him? Were he still a 'knight'? Would he still have faith? Would God accept him as His representative? This is the religious dilemma *per se*. Schwenckfeld was the knight of faith who obeyed, suffered, and died;



but he did not make anybody else suffer. He sacrificed none, only himself. True, we do not know of any "temptation" that he was exposed to as Abraham was; but there were ordinary temptations enough: a peaceful life, a rich household, honor, and fame. Schwenckfeld rejected them all. But he was spared the ultimate temptation of Abraham.

## ❧ 2 ❧

KIERKEGAARD framed the theory of the Christian knight of faith; in the same manner, Schwenckfeld regarded Abraham as a Christian. The parallel between God willing to sacrifice His son and Abraham willing to sacrifice Isaac must have struck Schwenckfeld with great force. Here was a parallel that even touched upon the question of the Eucharist. Here is the paradox of faith that is otherwise unparalleled.

Where is the faith today that will follow Kierkegaard, Schwenckfeld, or Abraham himself in this totality of surrender to God? We have much talk about Kierkegaard, but little that resembles a Schwenckfeldian life; and little that stands in the knighthood of faith. The paradox of faith which Kierkegaard analyzed, Schwenckfeld knew, and Abraham experienced to the last is something, anyway, that is hard to mediate. The paradox of faith of Abraham, as Kierkegaard said, is indeed beyond mediation.

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One hundred years after Kierkegaard, there is a wave of "existential" theology that, however, in most if not all cases is mere history. It is part of our 'culture' that produces so much in writing and so little of existential value. It is a writing that merely *reflects* without being creative or without being intimately related to the writer's own life. It is 'history'. There is little, if anything, that lives up to Kierkegaardian practical concepts, and there is just as little, if anything, that can be compared to the passionate life of Caspar von Schwenckfeld. On the Protestant side, the orthodox theologians follow Luther and the visible outward church; while there may be some 'heroism', there is no absolute Christian life and spirit. "Evangelists" in station-wagons without the possibility of martyrdom would have drawn scorn from our knights of faith. If we look for radical inwardness and spirituality, and if we look further for some form of renewed mysticism, we must leave, it seems, the old hallowed ground of Central Europe and go to the East from where two men derive their inspiration. We see much of the old spiritual-mystical trend in the regenerated form of religion which Nicolas Berdyaev advocates.<sup>64</sup> Berdyaev is by origin Greek-Orthodox and a Russian. Although he, too, is primarily a—critical—historian of philosophy, secondly a philosopher, and only lastly a theologian, we find at least views that are sympathetic to Christian inwardness. "Pietism", he says (*Spirit and Reality*, p. 162), "is the reaction against despiritualization, and a return to inner spirituality—to the *Innerlichkeit*." He condemns the Pietism of 1670-

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1720 as "narrow and alien to the heroic prophetic spirit", but he refers in this way, indirectly and without knowing, to Schwenckfeld, knight of faith, and Kierkegaard, his philosopher. The "new spirituality", for which he hopes, should include "prophetism and mysticism". We are reminded of Schwenckfeld's criticism of Lutheran outwardness and materialistic sacramentarianism when Berdyaev remarks there "is a note of eternal truth in the voice of the prophet when he condemns a petrified spirituality and its ritualistic forms."

One of the major differences between Schwenckfeld and modern thinkers is that the former stood in the shadow of Luther's doctrine of predestination, while the latter derive the concept of existential freedom from Kierkegaard and his age (German Idealism). This difference is not to be seen in such a manner as if elements of grace and destiny have become altogether obsolete in our thinking; rather, they are reconsidered in a new light. Martin Buber's theology is a case in point.<sup>65</sup> With Buber we return to the historical as well as spiritual fundament of Christianity, Judaism. But Buber has bound himself to a Jewish spirituality which grew, not in Palestine, but in exile: in Eastern Europe, mainly in Russia. This Hebrew branch is Hasidism. Buber sees man's "return" to God as a matter of both individual decision and divine prevenience.

Something that lay at the center of Schwenckfeld's thoughts (with which he struggled and which made us struggle in our interpretation) was the paradox of God's actual omnipotence and man's own willingness to fol-

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low the Good. How can we be good of our own volition, if God has predetermined everything? This is truly the paradox of man's freedom and unfreedom. This paradox was latent in Schwenckfeld's reflection upon man's condition on earth, but he did not express it in the form of the paradox. He stated that there are some forms of freedom, but that there also is predestination. He never quite emancipated himself in this respect from the domineering figure of Luther. Only centuries later did this intellectual emancipation become possible within the Protestant culture as a whole: in German Idealism into which Kierkegaard was placed. Buber, the German Jew, inspired by Kierkegaard but turning to Jewish religion as it developed in 'pietistic' Hasidism, saw the problem clearly. Without grace, he says, freedom is nothing; but man must nevertheless make the beginning. Man's freedom is there, yet grace is "prevenient". "The person who makes a decision knows that his decision is no self-delusion; the person who has acted knows that he was and is in the hand of God" (*Four Existentialist Theologians*, p. 22). Fundamentally, the turning to God is also a "constant renewal" of the individual spiritual rebirth (*Hasidism*, p. 77). This individual spiritual renewal must also be present in any sacrament. Speaking of the German Reformation, Buber points out that Zwingli's Eucharistic symbolism does not touch the "whole" of the person, and that Luther saw more deeply in this respect (p. 133). Not only the divine presence is important in the Lord's Supper, but also the presence of the human person *as a whole* (and not just as a thinker,

rememberer, eater or drinker). From this standpoint, Buber outlines a new philosophy—or theology—of the sacraments which differs sharply from the Christian theories but which is inspiring in itself. It is not ‘new’ in the sense that Buber is its author; for it goes back to Hasidism. But in Hasidism it was buried in anonymity, whereas with Buber it reaches prominence. This philosophy says, in effect, that there is no special selection of sacramental material (as, for instance, bread and wine); instead, “the holy . . . is laid in the things as sparks, and waits for its liberation and fulfilment through the human being who gives himself completely” (p. 134 f). These “sparks”—we are again reminded of Meister Eckhart’s “soul-spark”—are in all and any things; and all and any persons can be the ‘priest’ who deals with them. Therefore, this philosophy is called “pansacramentalism”—everything that exists and everyone who exists may partake in sacramental religion. This is not to be confused with pantheism because, simply, it is based on the concrete personal act of the one who partakes and who thus “liberates” the “thing” from its material indifference and lifts it to spiritual significance: in fact, to spiritual life. It is a form of religion which sees in our practical life, in our particular mode of existence, in the way we *do* things the essential clue. Whatever we do, we must do it right. If we do it right, and with full heart and an open mind, if our whole person is ‘engaged’, then we celebrate the Divine in the Earthly.

This spirituality goes its own Jewish way. Buber, it



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seems, is by far the strongest, most genuine religious seeker of the “existentialist theologians”, not a mere historian, but a creative thinker. And here modern Christian religiosity, when approaching Hasidism, comes again close to its source, Judaism, in one of Judaism’s late offsprings.

### ❧ 3 ❧

THE QUESTION of Abraham remains here: because we know that Abraham took Isaac to be the sacramental material which God demanded and which, however, was replaced by divine interference with animal material. Should this be the ‘historical’ meaning of the epic that with the substitution of the ram we reached the end of the era of the sacrifice of humans and the beginning of animal sacrifice? No, because long before Abraham, Abel offered “the firstlings of his flock” which were well received by God although Abel himself was slain by Cain (as Cain’s fruit was *not* well received by God—why not? Is this another arbitrary act of God? Another “suspension of the ethical”?)

Abraham was tested by God, he was “tempted” (in Kierkegaard’s terminology). We may presume that Cain, too, was tested by God. The two figures of the Old Testament suggest themselves as contrast. Cain whose offering was *not* well received by God lost his temper, he “was very wroth, and his countenance

fell". He failed the test, if it was one, because he had no faith. And since he had had no faith in the first place, his offering had not been made in an honest, faithful spirit. It had been an outward offering, not an inward; a superficial one to obey the letter of the law, not an essential one in the spirit of the law. That is the reason for God's refusal of his offering.

But just as in the epic of Abraham, the Old Testament is silent about the motivations of Cain and simply states the facts as they can be observed (and God, too, is a 'fact'). Only between the lines is there a hint of the inward religion which Cain failed to follow. But it is, obviously, this inward religion that matters, then and now. And it is outward religion that is condemned, then and now.

Abraham had faith. He did as told. He overcame the "temptation" to be merely "good" and yielded to God: thus he became the knight of faith with the saintly touch. He teleologically suspended the ethical and followed the Absolute. Where is the faith in the Absolute today, in the face of the 'relativity' of all values? Christianity has become a relative value, too; Christendom worships money, 'happiness', 'freedom'. Just as in Schwenckfeld's, or any other, time, it is an outward and petrified Christendom that reigns, but a Christendom that holds itself to be 'witness of the truth', that self-righteously points the finger at others while it itself falls short of long-established absolute values. To see that Schwenckfeld's message of inward religion and against outward church-going Christendom is still valid,

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let us just look with Schwenckfeldian eyes at what passes as 'Christianity'.

There is Christendom that goes to Church on Sunday and drops atom-bombs on Monday;

Christendom that goes to the Lord's Supper and urges preventive war;

Christendom that pays lip-service to God and worships mammon;

Christendom that, subtly, preaches we must be 'realistic' and that we must stand with both feet on the ground, while its Lord wanted all or nothing;

Christendom that interprets its own values as 'symbolical' and thus permits hate of one's enemy;

Christendom that imprisons Christians for pacifism;

Christendom that slaughters other Christians (black Christians) and prides itself in God's leadership;

Christendom that murders Jews and terms itself the God-sent bulwark against Communism;

Christendom that celebrates the Anti-Christ in the person of 'Christians'.

If Christ came today, He would be the first to be crucified. Who can imagine Christ supporting our business barbarism, our scientific paganism, our 'atoms-for-peace' program? Who can imagine Him serving in the nuclear-trained Armed Forces, paying income tax to a government that spends billions on preparations for germ-warfare, and that listens to Him only Sunday morning between ten and eleven?

*Of course*, if Christ came today, He would be cruci-

fied: Christ came into this world to atone by His sacrifice for the sins of mankind. *Of course*, he must be crucified: this is the historical as well as theological meaning of the New Testament. So all is well—we sin, and Christ comes to save us. Order is established. What else can we do but pray? We are weak in the flesh, we are sinners, Christ saves.

But nothing is well, because there is no attempt in mankind toward good will. That the flesh is weak, we know; but this is not the point. The point is that while our flesh is weak, our will is the agent that has the power of willing, only that we do not employ that agent. We are not only weak in the flesh, we are mainly weak of willing. There is the great weakness in the human *mind* that fails to prove itself superior to the flesh. The point is that Christians do not even *try*. There is lack of good will in Christians. There is apathy, smugness, conceit, and self-satisfaction. Christians have not started trying to be Christians. They are self-righteous and hypocritical. How can a Christian be anything but a Christian? How can a Christian be a businessman, with a bank-account, be a captain in the National Guard, shoot deer in the fall (but he doesn't like to eat deer, so he gives it away), be a thrifty provider, take pride in the educational life-adjustment of his children, be a good democratic citizen and fellow-member of various civic clubs and organizations (Kiwanis, PTA, The So-And-So Lodge), go to Church on Sunday—and be a Christian? (And this business man is still an 'ideal' case, because we prefer to look away from overt corruptness.) If he be

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all this *and* go to Church—he must either be ignorant of the basic Christian truths; or he must have a split mind doing one thing without knowing of the other thing; or he must be—if he is trained normally and mentally normal—a hypocrite. And if modern man makes religion his business, with a good salary, a free mansion, an up-to-date station-wagon, a well-fitting garb, pleasant in manners and good in speech, a man who inspires *trust*, a likable fellow to have around who enjoys nice company, drink and food, and in the evening a good TV-show, who takes care of his church-building, the lawn in front, the flood-lights at night, who knows how to preach, is moderate in political affairs, liberal but not too liberal (conservative, shall we say), who organizes community-affairs, is generous and charitable, and who is a beacon to all who look for guidance (and a man who does *not* sign anti-atom-bomb petitions!)—what is *this* man? (And this minister is still an ‘ideal’ for we prefer not to deal with those ministers who fight with the government over their income-tax return.) What shall we call *him*? Where is *his* religion? His *imitatio Christi*? His cross?

No religion, no inward genuine religion here. Not the type of religion that Kierkegaard, or Schwenckfeld, or Christ would have liked. No Abraham here, no knight of faith, no paradox and no faith. All smoothness, all harmony, all smugness, all peace (except, of course, when vandals damage the flood-lights!) Let’s not get excited, is the motto, let’s be careful, we have a reputation to guard. Even Luther would shudder here.



The two things that Schwenckfeld stood for: rejection of the pseudo-Christian churches, and religious inwardness—these two things have still to be accomplished by the Christendom of today and tomorrow.

## ❧ 4 ❧

BY WRITING such a book as this, we make ourselves guilty of treating in 'systematic' fashion an 'existential' writer who was a writer, however prolific, only secondarily and primarily a Christian apostle. Rather than executing such a book as this, we should have laid aside our pen and stepped out into the open. What is our study worth? Voltaire, the atheist, suggested at the end of his *Candide* that there was nothing for us to do in this nonsensical world but to withdraw to the work in the backyard. Such resignation is, naturally, diametrically opposed to the mystical resignation of Schwenckfeld and other spiritualists. The world, for the latter ones, may be evil or even meaningless, but God is not. And there is a gate in their backyards that is open while Voltaire's remains the closed prison.

What do we choose? Unless we believe in the intrinsic, or at least potential, goodness of nature and man and in the world's general soundness—a belief always difficult to hold—, we must either without hope go into seclusion (perhaps commit suicide), as Voltaire suggested, and be the total cynicist; or we must, grimly,

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revolutionize the world for a possible betterment of conditions (to scratch off, so to say, the century-old dust and see whether the world has not only superficially looked as bad as it did), as Marxism suggests; or we must place our faith in salvation. There is this fourfold choice: to accept the world as tolerable, as hopeless, worth changing, or worth saving.

This book on Schwenckfeld in the history of ideas and religion is, of course, no choice. It is an escape. It is 'history' which sees the world neither as tolerable, nor as hopeless, neither worth changing or worth saving, but which views the world as a spectacle. The historian, like the systematist, as such is more or less detached. The historian escapes, not through the gate in the back-yard, but through his imagination into the sphere of shadows: the past.

What, then, will be our choice? What will be *your* choice? Church-going Christendom generally thinks the world to be tolerable (that is why it is so ugly); artists think it worth representing (that is why it is so beautiful). Nihilists end in suicide (if they don't, they are no nihilists). The revolutionaries, the Jefferson and the Lincoln, the Thomas Münzer of Schwenckfeld's age, the Marx and the Lenin, are the "saviors with the sword" (Toynbee's words). The saviors in faith are the Buddhas, the Mohammeds, Christ, and in their wake, the apostles for all and the mystics for the few. (Here again is Schwenckfeld's ambiguous position: apostle of the Middle Way for the people, but mystic for some.)

Luther, Schwenckfeld's father of faith, belongs in this

connection with the great changers as a practical reformer, and with church-bound ministers as a preacher of faith. Luther, with whom Schwenckfeld started out, was a great man; he was the type of the tragic hero who sees slip away his life's work in the hands of an increasingly duller orthodoxy. Tragically bound between Christian love and faith on one side and the wrath of the political leader on the other, he demands obedience and earns opposition. The spiritual reformers of the 16th century broke away from him altogether.

Because Luther was statesman, world-bound reformer, and church-bound minister with all ramifications of such positions, Schwenckfeld had to break away from him. Politics of peace and war did not suit the apostle Schwenckfeld; outward religion in churches-with-walls did not suit the apostle of inward Christianity; orthodoxy—narrow, bigoted, self-righteous—was not compatible with his spirituality and mysticism. When man, 'Christian' man, showed his face in all its ugliness, Schwenckfeld looked the other way. What hope was there for *this* Christendom? *This* Christendom of intolerance, hate, persecution, scheming, intrigue, war and counter-war, killing and counter-killing?

Schwenckfeld made his choice: Salvation was the only hope for the evil which is mankind. It was a radical decision. It was an Either-Or: either you follow Christ, or you perish. And to follow Christ, is to follow Him absolutely.

Thus, Schwenckfeld went it alone and demanded from Christians that they be lone, too. In their loneli-

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ness, they had to be Christians. Loneliness points toward Christianity, Christianity points toward loneliness. One cannot be without the other.

There is no possibility of misunderstanding Caspar von Schwenckfeld in the essential points of his religion; his religion was directed toward the life beyond. There is and was, however, much misunderstanding or confusion about Luther's position, because Luther was at home in the two worlds of the Here and the There. Schwenckfeld *had* but one home: non-bourgeois, unattached, without domicile, *his* abode was the pneuma yonder time and space.

Luther, reformer, hero, statesman, was the great man of history, much greater than Schwenckfeld. But Schwenckfeld had a saintliness, where Luther was only great.

History withers away, as Schwenckfeld says, we must be greater than history and greater than a great man. "Everything has gone by like a shadow and like a scream, like a ship on the waves of which there is after a while no more trace and no course on the water . . . We are just so, as soon as we are born we have died and have no sign of virtue left . . ." <sup>66</sup>

Man is the guest who stays overnight, takes his leave, and is forgotten: the shadow, the scream, the ship, the fugitive.

Whence man comes, and whither he goes—Schwenckfeld tried to point it out. But Schwenckfeld does not ask us to follow Schwenckfeld, just as little as Schwenckfeld followed Luther. Schwenckfeld asks

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us to follow *ourselves*—and if, as a Christian, man also follows Christ, then man may be saved.

It is here that our book ends and the moment of choice begins.



## *Notes and Bibliography*

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> Forerunner of modern piety, cf. M. Fischer-Hübner, *Geistchristentum in der lutherischen Kirche Lauenburgs* (Ratzeburg, 1955), who even states that Schwenckfeld lives "in the hearts of Silesians expelled from their homes in 1946".

<sup>2</sup> Paul L. Maier, *Caspar Schwenckfeld on the Person and Work of Christ* (Assen, 1959); here a list of earlier works on Schw. R. Pietz, *Die Gestalt der zukünftigen Kirche* (Stuttgart, 1959), in *Calwer Hefte* No. 25; Pietz' diss. (Tübingen, 1955) is *Der Mensch ohne Christus. Eine Unters. zur Anthropologie C. Schwenckfelds*. Two more diss. are: G. Maron, *Individualismus und Gemeinschaft bei C. v. Schwenckfeld* (Göttingen, 1956); W. Knörrlich, *K. v. Schwenckfeld und die Reformation in Schlesien* (Bonn, 1957). T. Bergsten, "Pilgram Marbeck und seine Auseinandersetzung mit C. Schwenckfeld", *Kyrkohistorisk Årsskrift* (Uppsala, 1958) pp. 39-135. *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum*, Published under the Auspices of The Schwenckfelder Church, ed. Ch. D. Hartranft, E. E. S. Johnson, S. G. Schultz, 1907 ff, Vol. I-XVIII (I have seen vol. XVII and XVIII as proofs and manuscript, respectively). R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London, 1914). J. J. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity* (Philadelphia, 1957). A. Koyré, *Mystiques, Spirituels, Alchimistes* (Paris,

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1955). Other works by Koyré include *La philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (Paris, 1929) and, significantly, a book on Plato.

<sup>3</sup> J. Wahl, *A Short History of Existentialism* (New York, 1949).

<sup>4</sup> The literature on Radicalism versus Conservatism (Existentialism versus Systematism) is vast, the reader is referred to the works of the thinkers in question. Only a study of the sources can help. Editions of Plato, Aristotle, Thomas of Aquinas are easily available. For Meister Eckhart, cf. *Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke*, complete edition by various editors (German works ed. J. Quint, Stuttgart, 1936 ff). J. Tauler, *Die Predigten Taulers*, ed. F. Vetter (Berlin, 1910). H. Seuse, *Deutsche Schriften*, ed. K. Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart, 1907). Descartes and Pascal are available everywhere, also Kant. For Hamann, cf. H. A. Salmony, *Johann Georg Hamanns metakritische Philosophie*, vol. I (Zollikon, 1959). Hegel and Kierkegaard exist in English translations. Karl Jaspers, *Vernunft und Existenz* (Bremen, 1949), adds to our list of couples Vico as against Descartes-Hobbes-Grotius, Bayle as against Locke-Leibniz-Spinoza, Nietzsche as against 19th century science (pp. 9-10).

<sup>5</sup> Schwenckfeld "hardly a mystic" or spiritualist: W. Knoke "Schw. Sakramentsverständnis", *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 1959, XI 4, pp. 297 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Theologia Germanica*, cf. *Der Franckforter (Theologia Deutsch)* ed W. Uhl (Bonn, 1912).

<sup>7</sup> The early editors of the *Corpus Schwenckfeldianorum* labored under the force to defend Schw. against mysticism in which they included "unconscious contemplation, hypnotic states, convulsive or quietistic extasies" (Vol. I, p. LI). To be sure, Schw. thought and wrote always rationally, but he aimed at the super- or trans-rational; at the same time, mystical speculation of M. Eckhart *et al.* was never based

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on anything like pathological conditions. Mysticism and occultism are today clearly distinguishable (cf. C. Albrecht, *Das mystische Erkennen*, Bremen, 1958, and *Psychologie des mystischen Bewusstseins*, 1951).

<sup>8</sup> For middle-high German "Stillstand", cf. Benecke, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch*, "stille stân". Originally mystical terms like "Persönlichkeit" or "Gelassenheit" were absorbed by familiar speech with different connotations.

<sup>9</sup> Christ "uncreated", cf. H. J. Schoeps, *Vom Himmlischen Fleisch Christi* (Tübingen, 1951).

<sup>10</sup> The stress on reaching God "without means" grows stronger in Schw.'s later works, cf. *Corpus Schw.* XVI, 155, 159, 165, 197, 201, 256, 709, 894, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Infinite sphere and center everywhere, cf. D. Mahnke, *Unendliche Sphäre und Allmittelpunkt* (Halle, 1937).

<sup>12</sup> "gedult und gelassenheyt", *Corpus Schw.* II, 31 ("patience and composure"). II, 60, line 17 ff, has more of the old meaning; II, 68, line 12, more psychological meaning. III, 67, 68, 71, depends upon individual interpretation. Schw. obviously oscillates between old and new meanings which is quite symptomatic for his position between old and new "mysticism". VI, 1 ff, we have a complete treatise *Von der Gelassenhait*. The emphasis here is on: not to seek one's own ends; to be composed in wealth or poverty; to seek God for His own sake; to follow God's will in Jesus Christ; to be patient with God's sendings and grace; to be composed in faith; etc.—A contrast of sentences from Eckhart, Tauler, and Schw. will make clear the gradual shift in meaning of "Gelassenheit". Eckhart: "... wan daz dû dîn selbes ûzgangest in crêatiurlîcher wîse und lâzest got got in dir sîn" (op. cit. p. 92; "... than that you leave yourself according to your creaturely life and let God be God in yourself"). Or: "Der mensche, der gelâzen hât und gelâzen ist und der niermê gesihet einen ougenblik ûf daz, daz er

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gelâzen hât, und blîbet staete, unbewegēt in im selber und unwandellîche, der mensche ist aleine gelâzen" (p. 203; "The person who has left everything and who is resigned and who never looks for a moment upon that which he has left and who remains steadfast, unmoved in himself and unchangeable, this person only is resigned"). *Tauler*: "... und do in glicher gelossenheit: das ist minne. . ." (op. cit. p. 142 ff; "... and that in composed resignation: that is love [toward God]"). A little later: "Die uswendige suchunge do der mensch Got mit sucht, das ist in uswendigen uebungen guter werke . . . und aller meist mit uebungen der tugende, als demuetekeit, senftmuetekeit, stillikeit, gelossenheit. . ." ("The outward search with which man searches for God, that is done in outward performance of good deeds . . . and mostly with performance of virtue, such as humility, gentleness, modesty, composure . . ."). *Schw.*: "Dise menschen machen dem teuffel die welt zu eng. . . Wamit er sie anficht, das uberwinden sie in sollcher gelassenhait durch den glauben. . ." (VI, 3; "These people make the world too small for the devil. . . In so far as he tempts them, they remain strong in composure through faith. . ."). Next page: "Alhie ist auch weiter von nōten, das sich der mensch welchem Got seine gaben austaillet, derselbigen nicht als seines eigenthumbs anneme, oder sie ihm selbs zuaigne, Sonder gantz gelassen darinnen stee und alles wider inn Got auftrage. . ." ("Further it is necessary that man, to whom God gave his gifts, will not consider these to be his own, or use them for his own sake, but that he stands in them in a composed manner and will return everything to God. . .").

*Eckhart* insists on the abandonment of one's creaturely being and on man's becoming God-like, on a perfected God-like state. *Tauler*, however, has two concepts of "Gelassenheit": one that leads to God, the other that is "only"

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an earthly virtue. *Schw.* has put "Gelassenheit" into the pietistic frame-work of "inner surrender".

<sup>13</sup> A good analysis of mysticism of the negative dictum is given by H. Kunisch, *Spätes Mittelalter*, in *Deutsche Wortgeschichte*, ed. F. Maurer and F. Stroh (Berlin, 1943), p. 249. As for *Schw.*'s mysticism, cf. also Selina G. Schultz, *C. Schwenckfeld von Ossig* (Norristown, 1947), pp. 111 (quotations from *Schw.* which support the term "negative mysticism"!), 374 ff.

## CHAPTER I

<sup>14</sup> 'Western Civilization' understood in the sense that Spengler and Toynbee gave it.—A concise summary of the 16th century is found in I. W. Blayney, *The Age of Luther* (New York, 1947). As for Schwenckfeld's biographical data, we follow mostly Selina G. Schultz' biography.

<sup>15</sup> Luther's letter to German nobility: *An den christlichen Adel deutscher Nation*.

<sup>16</sup> Another Schwenckfeld book to be consulted in this connection is *De Cursu Verbi Dei*, 1527.

<sup>17</sup> Tolerance: cp. J. Kühn, *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (Leipzig, 1923), states, "Schwenckfelds grosse Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Toleranz is weder genügend erforscht noch gewürdigt" (p. 140). And he complains that "das Bild des Mannes als gar zu zufällig und fast als minderwertige und destruktive Neben- und Gegenerscheinung der Reformation sich darstellt" (p. 141, note 4).

<sup>18</sup> Reisner's hymn in *Johann Sebastian Bach, Sämtliche Kantatentexte*, ed. W. Neumann (Leipzig, 1956), pp. 316, 398. Sudermann's hymn in *Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch* (Göttingen, 1954); it can also be found in some American textbooks of German.



## CHAPTER II

<sup>19</sup> *Corp. Schw.* XVI, 1018, 1047—in Table of Contents of vol. XVI erroneously pp. 1017, 1046.

<sup>20</sup> Central place of Eucharist in Schwenckfeld: this seems to be true from beginning to end despite R. Pietz' generally correct analysis of five periods of Schw.'s literary activity (in which the period of the Eucharist is the second). There are, of course, no clear-cut divisions (which Pietz acknowledges, cf. *Der Mensch ohne Christus*, diss. Tübingen, 1955, p. 8 ff). Modern Eucharist: cp. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXX, 1, 2 (1959), articles by H. Sasse and P. M. Bretscher.

<sup>21</sup> For history of Eucharist, cp. W. M. Groton, *The Christian Eucharist and the Pagan Cults* (New York, 1914); E. S. Freeman, *The Lord's Supper* (New York, 1945); G. H. C. MacGregor, *Eucharistic Origins* (London, 1928).

<sup>22</sup> Franz Kafka, *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*), various German and English editions; cp. J. Seyppel, "The Animal Theme and Totemism in Franz Kafka", *Literature and Psychology*, IV, 4 (1954), revised reprint in *The American Imago*, 13, 1 (1956).

<sup>23</sup> cp. the Latin translation which is helpful in understanding the passage, especially the lines: "post glorificationem, in statum spiritualem, ac divinam essentiam translatum cum Deo in aequali potentia, in una virtute, in una Deitate unitum, esse verum essentialem et substantialem cibum animarum nostrarum ad vitam aeternam, secundum verba Christi: Caro mea vere est cibus, et sanguis meus vere est potus" (XIV, 117). Translation was presumably by Johann Heid von Daun, ca. 1558 (XIV, p. 99).

<sup>24</sup> Maier, op. cit., omits "so to speak" (p. 21), and does not exhaust the meaning here.

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<sup>25</sup> Schwenckfeld seems to oscillate here, in respect to his mysticism or semi-mysticism, just as much as he did in regard to the term "Gelassenheit" (cp. note for p. 24). An interpretation, or even classification, is again extremely difficult. Cp. the literature from F. W. Loetscher, *Schw.'s Participation in the Eucharistic Controversy of the Sixteenth Century* (diss. Princeton, Philadelphia, 1906) to G. Maron's "Die Anschauung von der religiösen 'Unmittelbarkeit' bei K. v. Schw., seine Stellung zu den Sakramenten" etc. (in *Jahrbuch der Schlesischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Breslau*, IV, 1959). The latter article is based on Maron's dissertation (cp. note for p. 7).

<sup>26</sup> cp. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XXX, 2. The German text is: "Die Worte, die unser Herr Jesus Christus beim Reichen des Brotes und des Kelches spricht, sagen uns, was er selbst in diesem Mahle allen, die hinzutreten, gibt: Er, der gekreuzigte und auferstandene Herr, lässt sich in seinem für alle in den Tod gegebenen Leib und seinem für alle vergossenen Blut durch sein verheissendes Wort mit Brot und Wein von uns nehmen und nimmt uns damit kraft des Heiligen Geistes in den Sieg seiner Herrschaft, auf dass wir im Glauben an seine Verheissung Vergebung der Sünden, Leben und Seligkeit haben" (p. 86).

<sup>27</sup> Trakl's poem "Ein Winterabend":

Wenn der Schnee ans Fenster fällt,  
Lang die Abendglocke läutet,  
Vielen ist der Tisch bereitet  
Und das Haus ist wohlbestellt.

Mancher auf der Wanderschaft  
Kommt ans Tor auf dunklen Pfaden.  
Golden blüht der Baum der Gnaden  
Aus der Erde kühlem Saft.

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Wanderer tritt still herein;  
Schmerz versteinerte die Schwelle.  
Da erglänzt in reiner Helle  
Auf dem Tische Brot und Wein.

### CHAPTER III

<sup>28</sup> For freedom and order, cp. J. Seyppel, *Ausdrucksformen Deutscher Geschichte—Eine Morphologie der Freiheit* (Schlehdorf, 1952).

<sup>29</sup> Third alternative, cp. J. Seyppel, "Freedom and the Mystical Union in *Der Cherubinische Wandersmann*" (Angelus Silesius), *Germanic Review* XXXII (1957), pp. 93-112. The great struggle between the intellectualism of Thomas of Aquinas and the voluntarism of Duns Scotus in the middle of which Eckhart was caught, eventually led, among other things, to the prosecution of Eckhart and the condemnation of 28 of his theses, cp. O. Karrer and H. Piesch, *Meister Eckharts Rechtfertigungsschrift vom Jahre 1326* (Erfurt, 1927).

<sup>30</sup> Schwenckfeld's relation to Eckhart: Maron and Maier (*op. cit.*) give credit to the Meister (p. 68, p. 110); *Corp. Schw.* vol. I p. LI, vol. IV p. 519 misunderstood him. Otherwise, I see no mention of him. Sudermann, the collector of manuscripts is treated by Hans Hornung, *Daniel Sudermann als Handschriftensammler* (diss. Tübingen, 1957); also cp. W. Zeller, "Meister Eckhart bei Valentin Weigel", *Eckhartiana V. Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* LVII (1938), p. 333 ff; A. Hegler, *Geist und Schrift bei Sebastian Franck* (Freiburg, 1892), Eckhart references pp. 76, 275, 284.

<sup>31</sup> The will in Schw.'s work: B. Ihringer, *Der Schuldbegriff bei den Mystikern der Reformationszeit* (diss. Bern, 1912) is very confused (especially p. 47, note 2); Maron, *op. cit.*, is too brief; very good is Pietz, *op. cit.* (diss.), pp. 57 f, 82 ff, 91 f.

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<sup>32</sup> As to the question of the relationship between grace (*gratia praeveniens*) and the "new birth", cp. Pietz' profound analysis pp. 88-9, the result of which is that grace indeed precedes freedom; it is a sudden shift from the former to the latter and no gradual change or growth.

<sup>33</sup> "Divine visitation", cp. Schultz' biography pp. 100-104; Secret of Schw.'s mysticism, cp. W. Nigg, *Heimliche Weisheit* (Zurich & Stuttgart, 1959), p. 63. Jonathan Edwards: cp. H. W. Schneider, *A History of American Philosophy* (New York, 1946), pp. 12 ff.

<sup>34</sup> William James has an interesting chapter on mysticism in his book *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, Modern Library, no date, copyright 1902), lectures XVI and XVII, pp. 370 ff.

<sup>35</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Scandal of Christianity* (London, 1951). His polemics against mysticism in *Die Mystik und das Wort* (Tübingen, 1928), a book which more appropriately should have been called "Mysticism against The Word". For a modern treatment of the freedom of the will, cp. Martin Heidegger's work (an analysis of it by J. Seyppel, "A Comparative Study of Truth in Existentialism and Pragmatism", *The Journal of Philosophy* L, 1953, No. 8, with special reference to the will-problem).

## CHAPTER IV

<sup>36</sup> Tauler: cp. H. Kunisch, *Ein Textbuch aus der alt-deutschen Mystik* (Hamburg, 1958); F. Vetter, *Die Predigten Taulers* (Berlin, 1910). His legendary writings critically analyzed by H. Denifle (Strassburg, 1879). *Corp. Schw.*, XIV, 349 ff, erred when it thought of having published a Tauler work; the editors here were subject to the same kind of misunderstanding that Schwenckfeld himself perpetrated in regard to the nature of Tauler's mysticism.

<sup>37</sup> The translation of Tauler into English is difficult; such

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words as "minneklich", "edel", and his address to the Dominican nuns ("Kinder") easily lead into confusion. First confrontation of *Schw.* and *Tauler*:

"Wenn dann der trewe hirt das schaaff findet, so legt ers auff seine schultern, unnd tregt es haim inn seinen schaaftal. Die schultern, wie ain alter leerer sagt, seind die vergottete menschait Christi, von woelcher dise getragen, jr eingeleibt, und durch sie inn die uberwesentliche ewige Gotthait, das ist entlich inn die glorien Gottes (darinnen der mensch Christus regirt) getragen, versetzt, und gelaitet werden, da alle volkomne waide, wonne und ewigwerende froewd ist. Es ist auch sonst kain ander weg ins reich Gottes, dann die menschait, der leib, flaisch und blut Christi. Es ist der new unnd lebendige weg. . .

"... also wirst du im gelich und wirst das minnekliche scheffelin das er uf siner achselen tragen sol von der vergotteter menscheit der du an disem nach gevolget hast, bis in die überweseliche gottheit, do alle volkomene weide ist. Kinder, dis mus vor allen dingen von not sin. Nu wissest, als du alsus ein scheffelin bist worden und dem minneklichen bilde, unserm herren Jhesu Christo, bist nachgevolget, das von not sin mus, denne bist du alrerst wol ein gut heilig mensche. Aber solt du ein edel mensche werden, so wissest das es noch unmossen verre ist, do du noch über klimmen must." (op. cit. pp. 142 ff)

For *Schw.* research important is the fact that A. L. Corin, *Sermons de J. Tauler* (Liège, 1924), compared, among other prints, the Tauler edition of Augsburg (1508) with Vetter's edition (1910).

<sup>38</sup> Tauler's radical but careful expressions, cp. Kunisch, *op. cit.*, p. 76; while Eckhart spoke of the deification of man



without any conditions attached to it, Tauler always says man becomes deified "by grace, not by nature". "Edel"—noble, cp. Kunisch, *op. cit.*, p. 80, note 1.

<sup>39</sup> Second confrontation of *Schw.* and *Tauler*:

"Taulerus ain alter lehrer spricht, Die fraw die da sucht, is die Gotthait, die latern, ist die vergottete menschait, Der pfennig ist die seele, woelcher pfennig drey ding, sein recht gewicht, sein gute materi, gold oder silber, und sein ordentlich bildnüz, oder geprech musz haben, sol er anderst recht, gut und geng sein. Also musz ain Christglaubige seel, auch solche drey ding haben, so sie im gericht Gottes bestehen, und sein Reich sol ererben, jhre materia ist ein new gaistlich, gehailigt flaisch, damit sie ist verainigt, Ir gewicht seind die tugenden, die gaben des h. Gaists, one woelche alle seelen (wenn sich der Satan auff die ander schüssel setzt) vil zu leicht für Gott befunden werden."

Dise frowe das ist die gottheit. Die lucerna das ist die vergoettete menscheit. Der phenning das ist die sele. Diser phenning der mus haben drú ding, und gebrist im diser eins, so enist er nüt ein recht phenning. Er sol haben sin gewicht und sin materie, sin múnzte und sin bilde: dis mus er alles von not haben. Er mus sin von golde oder von silber: das mus sin materie sin. Och kinder, was wunders ist umbe disen phenning! Dis ist wol ein gúldin phenning, und ist ein unmessig und ein unbegriffenlich ding umbe disen minneklichen phenning. Diser phenning sol haben sin gewicht. Wissist: dis gewichte dis phennings das ist unwigelich; er wigt me denne himelrich und ert-rich und alles das do inne beslossen ist. Wan Got ist in disem phenning, und dar umbe wigt er als vil als Got." (*op. cit.*, pp. 142 ff).

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<sup>40</sup> Schw.-Franck, cp. Pietz, *op. cit.* (diss.), pp. 106-122, which is the best and most extensive discussion of the two mystics; more literature given by Maier, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Cp. also the books by E. Teufel, "*Landräumig*", *S. Franck* (Neustadt a. d. Aisch, 1954); H. Hermelink, *Geschichte der Evangelischen Kirche in Württemberg* (Tübingen, 1949); J. Endriss, *S. Francks Ulmer Kämpfe* and K. Schw. *Ulmer Kämpfe* (Ulm, 1936); W.-E. Peuckert, *S. Franck* (München, 1943); A. Hegler, *Geist und Schrift bei S. Franck* (Freiburg, 1892); R. M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers* etc.; P. Hankamer, *Die Sprache* (Bonn, 1927, p. 47); Koyré (*op. cit.*) and others.

<sup>41</sup> Franck's famous phrase: "Darumb ist Gott allain der/ der aller wesen Wesen/ und aller ist Ist/ ist/ und so vil alle ding ist"; quoted from the rare first edition of the *Paradoxa ducenta octoginta* (Ulm, 1534), a copy of which is in the German Baroque Collection of Yale Univ.

<sup>42</sup> Boehme, cp. W. E. Peuckert, *Das Leben Jakob Böhmes* (Jena, 1924); P. Hankamer, *J. Böhme* (Bonn, 1924); J. J. Stoudt, *Sunrise to Eternity* (Philadelphia, 1957) and his excellent diss. *The Mysticism of J. B.* (Edinburgh, 1942, unpublished). Boehme-Franck: P. Hankamer, *Die Sprache*, p. 196, note 16. Boehme-Weigel: Peuckert, *J.B.*, pp. 73, 174. Schw.-Weigel: Peuckert, *op. cit.*, p. 74. Schw.-Paracelsus: Peuckert, *Die Rosenkreutzer* (Jena, 1928, p. 254). Boehme-Paracelsus: Peuckert, *Pansophie* (Stuttgart, 1936, p. 434). Boehme's influence: M. L. Bailey, *Milton and J.B.* (New York, 1914); K. R. Popp, *J.B. und Isaac Newton* (Leipzig, 1935); E. Benz, *Adam, der Mythos vom Urmenschen* (München, 1955), and many others.

<sup>43</sup> Schw.-Boehme: Peuckert, *J.B.*, pp. 68 ff, 171 ff; Stoudt, *op. cit.*; also O. Kadelbach, *Ausführliche Geschichte K. Schw.* (Lauban, 1860, p. 24); Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 154 ff, 190; Koyré, *J. Boehme*, *op. cit.*, p. 237, note 1; H. H. Brinton,

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*The Mystic Will* (New York, 1930, p. 59); H. Grunsky, *J.B.* (Stuttgart, 1956, p. 32); Maron, *op. cit.*, p. 7, and others. Except for Peuckert and Stoudt, all authors deal very generally with Schw. and Boehme and most also very vaguely; they are satisfied with assumptions as to "influence" of Schw. upon Boehme. No one compared the two as to their Christology and the Eucharist—this is new ground.

<sup>44</sup> Boehme, the letter to Lindner: "Beim Schwenckfeld stösset dieser Punkt an, dass er Christum für keine Kreatur hält", etc., edition K. W. Schiebler, Leipzig, 1847, vol. VII, p. 409. There is no critical edition of Boehme's works; the latest is the one by A. Faust and W.-E. Peuckert, *Sämtliche Schriften, Faksimile-Neudruck der Ausgabe von 1730* (Stuttgart, 1955 ff). All our quotations are from the Schiebler edition that uses modernized German.

<sup>45</sup> The exact titles of the two works on *Threefold Man* are: *Appendix. Das ist: Gründliche und wahre Beschreibung des dreifachen Lebens im Menschen* (vol. III, pp. 379 ff), and *De triplici vita hominis oder hohe und tiefe Gründe vom dreifachen Leben des Menschen* (vol. IV, pp. 3 ff).

<sup>46</sup> Martin John's letters in hand-written *Epistolar: das ist Missiven und Sendebriefe, viler Hoherleuchteter Creutzzeugen . . . , vom 1527ten Jahr an bisz zum Ende des 16. [17.] seculo.*

<sup>47</sup> Andrew S. Berky, *Practitioner in Physick. A Biography of Abraham Wagner 1717-1763* (Pennsburg, 1954).

<sup>48</sup> History of Schwenckfeldianism: cf. Selina G. Schultz, *op. cit.*, pp. 403 ff. Letters concerning Breckling-Hohburg-Gifftheil in the *Schwenckfelder Library, Epistolar* etc., pp. 296 ff, 325 ff. Cf. Friedrich Breckling, *Speculum Seu Lapis Lydius Pastorum* etc. (Amsterdam, 1660, pp. 63, 261, 370); H. C. v. Gersdorf, *Geistreiche Lieder und Poetische Betrachtungen* (Halle, 1729); M. S. Sprögel, *Consilia und Responsa Theologica* (Frankfurt, 1705); A. K. Scharf-

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schmid, *Das hochwichtige Werk der Wiedergeburt* (Quedlinburg, 1702). A man of Schwenckfeldian destiny was Justinian Ernst von Welz, Freiherr von Eberstein, who published *De Vita Solitaria* (Ulm, 1663). All these books, with the exception of Scharfschmid's, are in the German Baroque Collection of Yale University, cf. the catalogue *German Baroque Literature* by Curt von Faber du Faur (New Haven, 1958). Schwenckfeld and Prussia is dealt with by Martin Lackner, *Geistfrömmigkeit und Enderwartung* (Stuttgart, 1959, especially pp. 13 ff); Christoph Barthut and Quirin Kuhlmann are Lackner's major concern.

## CHAPTER V

<sup>49</sup> Juan de Valdés, cf. *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. G. H. Williams and A. M. Mergal (Philadelphia, 1957, vol. XXV in The Library of Christian Classics). It is meaningful that there is also a chapter on Schwenckfeld in this book.

<sup>50</sup> Jansenism, cf. N. Abercrombie, *The Origins of Jansenism* (Oxford, 1936); E. Romanes, *The Story of Port Royal* (London, 1907); F. T. A. Fletcher, *Pascal and the Mystical Tradition* (Oxford, 1954), on St. Theresa pp. 44, 119, 149, on St. John p. 18, on Cusanus p. 44; for Eckhart and Spanish mysticism, cp. H. Piesch, *Meister Eckharts Ethik* (Lucerne, 1935, p. 104).; for connections between German women-mysticism and Spanish mysticism, cp. M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* (Munich, 1926, vol. I, p. 475).

<sup>51</sup> Pascal, quotations are from *Great Shorter Works*, ed. E. Cailliet and J. C. Blankenagel (Philadelphia, 1948); on geometry p. 31, on Jesus p. 117, Fletcher p. 39, 139.

<sup>52</sup> On regeneration p. 78, on Eucharist p. 179, on baptism pp. 158 ff.

<sup>53</sup> On Inquisition p. 162 f; *Factum for the Priests*, p. 173 ff.

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<sup>54</sup> Kierkegaard, quotations from *A. Kierkegaard Anthology*, ed. R. Bretall (Princeton, 1947); on mysticism, p. 12. Joachim Wach, *Types of Religious Experience* (Chicago, 1951), on Schwenckfeld pp. 135 ff, on Kierkegaard pp. 138, 146, 156, 158, 159. Other Schwenckfeld-Kierkegaard comparisons, Maron *op. cit.* (diss.), negatively p. 25, positively p. 184.

<sup>55</sup> L. Gabriel, *Existenzphilosophie* (Wien, 1951), ref. to pietism pp. 15, 35, 44 f. Cp. especially E. Peterson, "Kierkegaard und der Protestantismus", *Wort und Wahrheit* 3, 8, pp. 579 ff. On Boehme, Anthology p. 14.

<sup>56</sup> History of Pietism from Schwenckfeld to Spener and Francke: remains largely to be written, for the time being cp. Arndt's and Boehme's works, Hohburg's books (here Fischer-Hübner, *op. cit.*, p. 9 ff), our references above; Pietism in Denmark, cp. A. Ritschl, *Geschichte des Pietismus* (Bonn, 1880 ff, 3 vols.), vol. II, pp. 497 ff, 505 ff, 522, vol. III, p. 269, E. Sachsse, *Ursprung und Wesen des Pietismus* (Wiesbaden, 1884, Philadelphia edition), pp. 194 ff (Schwenckfeld).

<sup>57</sup> Kierkegaard and Protestantism, cp. Petersen *op. cit.* p. 583.

<sup>58</sup> "Angst kumpt von der enge", says Schwenckfeld, V, 89. M. Channing Pearce, *The Terrible Crystal* (New York, 1941).

<sup>59</sup> Enthusiasm, Anthology p. 264.

<sup>60</sup> *Attack upon 'Christendom'*, ed. W. Lowrie (Princeton, 1944).

<sup>61</sup> "beständige ergriffung", cp. Benecke, *Mittelhochdeutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1854 ff), vol. I, p. 570 ("grife") and p. 572 ("grift")!

<sup>62</sup> Witness of truth, cp. Maron *op. cit.* (diss.), p. 166.



## CHAPTER VI

<sup>63</sup> For the "question of Abraham", cp. the article "Unlös-bare moralische Konflikte. Ihre Auslegung im Judentum, Christentum und der Existentialphilosophie" by David Baumgardt in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* (XI, 4, 1959, pp. 297 ff). Martin Buber, *The Suspension of Ethics in Four Existentialist Theologians*, ed. W. Herberg (New York, 1958).

<sup>64</sup> Nicolas Berdyaev, *Spirit and Reality* (New York, 1939).

<sup>65</sup> Martin Buber, *Hasidism* (New York, 1948).

<sup>66</sup> The Schwenckfeld quotation is from X, 72 f: "Wir seind von dem wege der warhait/ weit irr gangen/ unnd das Liecht der gerechtigkeit/ hat unns nicht geschienen/ unnd die Sonne dess verstands ist unns nit aufganngen: Wir haben eyttel unrechte unnd schedliche wege gegangen/ und haben gewandelt wueste unwege/ aber dess Herren wege haben wir nit gewüsst: Was hat unns nun unnsere Hoffart nutz bracht? Oder was hat unns genützet der pracht unsers Reichtumbs? Es ist alles dahin gefaren/ wie ain schatten/ unnd wie ain geschray/ das fürüber faeret/ wie ain Schiff/ das auf den Wasserwagen dahinlaufft/ welches man so es fürüber ist/ kaine spur finden kan/ noch dessebigen ban in der Flut/ etc. Eben also seind auch wir/ so bald wir geporen seind gewesen/ habend wir air ennd genommen/ unnd haben kain Zaichen der Tugent beweiset/ aber in unserer bosshait seind wir verzeret.

Solliche unnd dergleichen wort/ werden reden in der Hellen die/ die gesündet haben/ Dann die hoffnung dess Gottlosen/ ist wie staub vom wind zerstrewet/ wie ain dünner reiff vom ungewitter vertrieben/ unnd wie ain rouch vom wind verwebet/ Unnd wie man ains gasts vergisst/ der über nacht bleibt/ unnd dahin faret. . ."

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